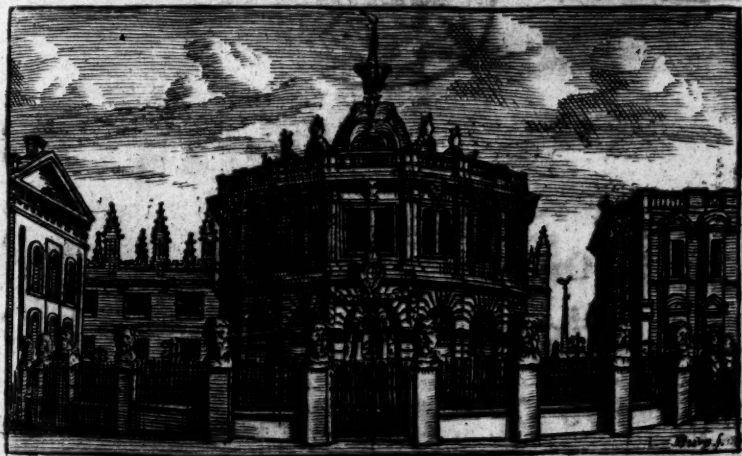


E I G H T E E N
S E R M O N S
O N
S E V E R A L
O C C A S I O N S.

By THOMAS NEWLIN M. A. Fellow of
Magdalene College in Oxford.



O X F O R D,

Printed at the THEATRE for *Ant. Peisley* Bookseller;
and are to be Sold by *J. Knapton, W. Meadows,* and
J. Morphew, Bookfellers in *London.* 1720.

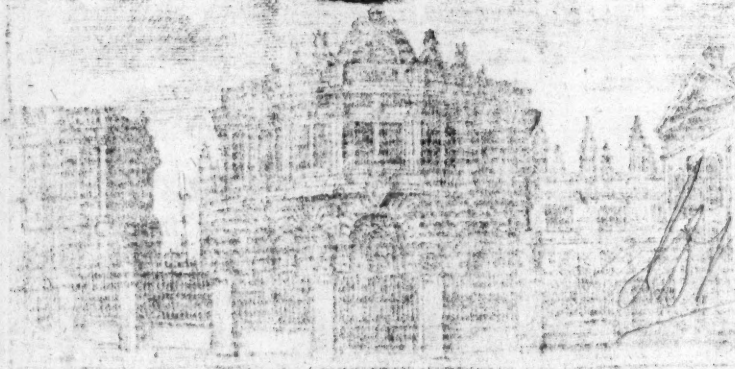
THE
SERMONS

ON
Imprimatur,

ROB. SHIPPEN,

Vice-Can. OXON.

May 24. 1720.



Printed at the University Press, Oxford, by J. Sturges, Printer to the University, in the Year 1720.

DEDICATION
TO
M^{rs} BENNET
OF
SALTHORP
IN
WILT-SHIRE.

MADAM,
THAT the Following
Discourses might be
favourably receiv'd,
and be rendred capable of do-
ing some good in the World,

DEDICATION.

I presum'd to beg the favour
of Your Protection.

And I cannot but acknowledge my self highly indebted to Your Goodness, for complying with so troublesom a Request, when Your Modesty and Humility would rather have declin'd the Publick mention of Your Name.

It is a great satisfaction to me that I enjoy the Patronage of such a Name, as has far extended it self, and gain'd a general Love and Esteem by doing Good.

Though

DEDICATION.

Though You have industriously conceal'd your Charity, and studied to convey it through secret channels, yet it has necessarily manifested itself, and been discover'd by its extensive Influence.

Having the Happiness of being nearly acquainted with Your Character, I can with a Just confidence speak of Your Virtues; and must trespass so far upon You, as even to glory in the Patronage of an affectionate Daughter of the Church of *England*, who has been always Eminent for Her constancy to it, Her fervent
De-

DEDICATION.

Devotion to God, Her unwea-
ried endeavours to relieve the
Necessitous, and Her unshaken
fidelity to *Her Friend*.

I am willing to perswade my
self, that the following Dis-
courses are agreeable to those
Principles upon which You
have always acted, and may
through the Influence of Your
amiable Character, in some
measure answer the great and
glorious Ends which You con-
stantly pursue.

That *the Father of the Fa-
therless, and He that pleadeth the
Cause of the Widows*, may pro-
long

Mag
May 2

DEDICATION.

long Your valuable Life, and
restore You to a state of Per-
fect Health: and that You may
continue for many Years, a
Comfort to Your Relations,
(and especially to him who is
nearest to You) a Support to
the Afflicted, an Ornament to
Your Sex, and a Blessing to
Mankind, is the earnest prayer
of

Madam,

Your most Oblig'd

Humble Servant,

THO. NEWLIN.

*Magd. Coll.
May 24. 1720.*

DEDICATION.

long Your valuable Life, and
restore You to a state of Per-
fect Health: and that You may
continue for many Years, a
Comfort to Your Relations,
(and especially to him who is
nearest to You) a Support to
the Afflicted, an Ornament to
Your Sex, and a Blessing to
Mankind, is the earnest prayer

Your Obedient

Humble Servant,

THO. NEWLIN.

Ms. Coll.
Ms. A. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.

THE CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE Esteem that attends the constant Practice of Virtue.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at Magdalene College, on St. John Baptist's Day.

St. Mark VI. 20. *For Herod fear'd John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy —* p. 1.

SERMON II.

The Duty and Advantages of Sincerity.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish-Church of St. Peter's in the East, Oxford.

Psalms XV. 2. — *And speaketh the truth from his heart.* p. 19.

SERMON III.

The Effectual Influence of the Love of Christ.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at St. Peter's, in Lent.

2 Cor. V. 14. *For the Love of Christ constraineth us —* p. 41.

SERMON.

THE CONTENTS.

SERM. IV.

The Mercy of God in Preserving us.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish-Church of
St. Peter's in the East, Oxford.

Plalm CIII. 4. *Who redeemeth thy Life from Destruction, and crowneth thee with Loving kindness and tender Mercies.* p. 61.

SERM. V.

The Goodness of God manifested in our Redemption.

A Sermon Preach'd at Magdalene-College in
Oxford, on Christmas Day.

1 Tim. I. 15. *This is a faithfull saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save Sinners.* P. 77.

SERM. VI.

God the only just Object of Fear.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of
Oxford, at St. Mary's.

St. Luke XII. 4, 5. — *I say unto you, my Friends be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath kill'd, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

P. 99.

SERM.

THE CONTENTS.

SERM. VII.

The Duties of our Christian Warfare.

A Sermon Preach'd at Brightwell in Oxfordshire.

St. Luke XII. 35. *Let your Loyns be girded about, and your Lights burning.*

P. 121.

SERM. VIII.

The certainty of a General Resurrection.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of Oxford, At St. Mary's, on Easter Monday.

1 Peter I. 3. 4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a Lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, To an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.*

P. 139.

SERM. IX.

The Promise of a Comforter Consider'd.

A Sermon Preach'd at Magdalene College in Oxford, on Whit-Sunday.

St. John. XIV. 16. *And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.*

P. 157.

SERM.

THE CONTENTS.

SERM. X.

The Authority and Duty of the Civil Magistrate.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at the Assizes holden there by the Honourable Mr Baron Price, and Mr Baron Banaster.

Deuter. I. 17. *For the Judgment is God's.* p. 177.

SERM. XI.

The Duty and Happiness of Trusting in God.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish-Church of St Peter's in the East, Oxford.

Psalms XXXVII. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* p. 197.

SERM. XII.

Persecution contrary to the Temper of the Gospel.

A Sermon Preach'd on the Fifth of November before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's.

St. Luke IX. 55, 56. *But he turn'd and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* p. 215.

SERM. XIII.

The Necessity of shewing our Faith by our Works.

A

THE CONTENTS.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish-Church of
St. Clement, Oxford.

St. James II. 19. *Thou believest that there is one
God; Thou doest well: the Devils also believe
and tremble.* p. 237.

SERM. XIV.

The Hand-writing upon the Wall.

A Sermon Preach'd at St. Martin's in Oxford.

Daniel V. 27. *Thou art weigh'd in the Balances,
and art found wanting.* p. 255.

SERM. XV.

The Lamb that was provided for a Burnt offering.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of
Oxford, at St. Mary's.

Gen. XXII. 8. *And Abraham said, My Son,
God will provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-
offering.* p. 275.

SERM. XVI.

The Centurion's Faith and Humility.

A Sermon Preach'd before the University of
Oxford, at St. Mary's.

Mat. VIII. 8. *The Centurion answer'd and said,
Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come
under my Roof: But speak the word only, and
my Servant shall be Healed.* p. 293.

SERM.

The CONTENTS.

SERM. XVII.

The Government of the Thoughts.

A Sermon Preach'd at *Brightwell* in *Oxfordshire*.

Prov. IV. 23. *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence:
for out of it are the Issues of Life.* P. 315.

SERM. XVIII.

The Weakness and Uncertainty of Human Reason.

A Sermon Preach'd before the *Univerſity of
Oxford*, at *St Mary's*.

Dan. IV. 31, 32. *While the word was in the
King's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven,
ſaying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is
ſpoken, The Kingdom is departed from thee. And
they ſhall drive thee from Men, and thy dwell-
ing ſhall be with the Beaſts of the field.* P. 337.

5 JY61

The Esteem that attends the constant Practice of Virtue.

^A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
U N I V E R S I T Y

^{O F}
O X F O R D,

At Magdalene College, on St. JOHN Baptist's
Day, 1713.

St. MARK VI. 20.

*For Herod fear'd John, knowing that
he was a just man and an holy —*

ST. JOHN the Baptist having constantly spoken the Truth, and boldly rebuk'd Vice, (to compleat his Character) had the honour of suffering for the truth's sake.

His strict and Inflexible Justice, his Ardent Zeal for the Glory of God, and his Avow'd Hatred of Sin, stirred up a powerfull Enemy

Serm. I.

^A

against

2. *The Esteem that attends*

against Him, and provoked the keen Resentment of *Herodias*, who was engag'd in a vicious alliance with *Herod*, and had therefore a mighty influence over Him. We may reasonably believe that the Preacher of Repentance, had frequently alarmed her Conscience with unacceptable Reproofs, and Quicken'd it with a sense of guilt, and an expectation of vengeance: she that had been accusom'd to hear only *smooth Things*, was unable to bear his ingenuous Behaviour, (which she called Presumption) and resolv'd to leave nothing undone, till she had wrought her Revenge upon him: She us'd all the Arts of Insinuation and methods of Address, which were likely to win upon *Herod*, the Partaker of her Sins; and since their Cause was the same, and the suppos'd Injury, was common to both; it might be imagined, that He would be as ready to take away the life of *St. John*, as she was to desire this gratification of her Passion; that she could not make a more agreeable Request, and that he only waited for an Opportunity of Granting it.

But the Holy Scriptures assure us, that though she had a Quarrel against Him, and would have kill'd him, she could not. For *Herod* fear'd *John*, knowing that he was a just man and an holy.

The Rays of the Divine goodness in *St. John*, shone with an awesfull Lustre; and the Beauty of Holiness, recommended it self, even to *Herod*, notwithstanding that, his Favourite

Lusts

the constant Practice of Virtue. 3

Lusts pleaded earnestly against it, and *Herodias* was allways at hand, endeavouring to hinder its Efficacy by her Importunate Complaints, and ensnaring Suggestions.

She did at last, indeed surprize the Adulterer into a Compliance, by the pleasing Artifices of her Daughter, and obtain'd a generall Grant, when he was best dispos'd to hearken to any Demand.

He that had observ'd His Impartial Re-prover and when he heard him, did many things, Mark 6. 10. and heard him gladly, He was not aware of the ill use that was afterwards made of the Advantage that he had rashly given against Him; and as soon, as he perceiv'd it, he repented of it.

Tho' he freely promised to gratify the Daughter of *Herodias*, with whatsoever she could ask, even to the Half of his Kingdom, v. 23. he was yet griev'd, when she ask'd for the Head of *John* the Baptist: The King was exceeding v. 26. sorry, yet for his Oath's sake, and for their sakes, which sate with Him, He would not reject her. He would have receded from his Promise, had he not mistaken the force of the Obligation, for he valued the Life of this just and holy man more than even the half of his Kingdom.

From hence we may raise this observation, That Integrity gains the Esteem, even of the Vicious and Profane, and constrains them to Reverence the Man that goes on in a steady course of Righteousness.

The Esteem that attends

And This may be deriv'd from the following Reasons:

First, From the Establish'd Notions, and Natural Sense of Good, and Evil:

Secondly, From the Excellence, and Superiority which Virtue has over Vice:

Thirdly, From the likeness it bears to the Divine Attributes:

Fourthly, From the beautiful Simplicity of Truth and Innocence; And,

Lastly, From the Impartial Judgment which wicked men make of Things, in their sober Intervals, and whenever they are brought to themselves

And *First*, It may be deriv'd from the Establish'd Notions, and natural sense of Good and Evil. As Men are distinguish'd from the rest of the Creation, by one common Principle of Reason, so they, all, form the same conceptions of Vice and Virtue, before they are tainted with Error, or misled by the corruption of their Nature. The lines of their Duty are so deeply engraven on their minds, that they cannot utterly erase them, unless their whole Frame were also to be dissolv'd. They may indeed fully the Light of Reason, and partly wear away the impression that was made upon them. And whilst many retain a just abhorrence of Evil, others may endeavour to deceive themselves by embracing, a more favourable opinion of it. But yet they have
some

the constant Practice of Virtue.

5

some glimmering imperfect knowledge, to accuse and upraid them with folly: and tho' they would cover it with a specious appearance, by *calling evil good, and good evil*, yet Isa. 5. 20. they cannot so pervert their Faculties as to support their vain glorious Boasting, with a suitable Belief, and think that these things are just as they represent them. Tho' their Wills are deprav'd and engaged in behalf of Sin, yet their Judgments cannot so contradict, and be the Reverse of themselves. They may be over-ruled, but will still serve to render them self condemned, and to justify the conduct of the Righteous.

They would fain conceal this their Approbation, and silence their Thoughts, with loud Laughter, and confident Raillery; But their first sense of Things, tho' not lively enough, to be the Principle of their own Actions, will yet oblige them to pay some regard to those that have acted up to their Duty.

And the Nature of Vice and Virtue, is not to be changed by their sinfull Desires, or become subservient to their Inclinations; but the marks that are stamp'd upon them will last for ever, and the difference between them is too wide to be closed. There is a fix'd standard of true worth and goodness, and it is not left to be determin'd by the uncertain Opinions, or the Arbitrary Wills of Men, but it is every where the same; and Virtue is thought Praise-worthy, as Vice passes for a Term of Infamy and Reproach; and we are

con-

constrained to Judge thus of it; and at the first mention of any act of Piety, Charity, or Self-denial, our minds are pleas'd with it, and glow with a generous emulation: for we know, that it is warranted by right Reason, and by the Authority of an Allwise God. When we behold a Man beset with Temptations, and getting the mastery over them, and subduing himself; when we observe Him sacrificing his Interest to his Duty, and hazard- ing all that is dear to him, in this World, rather than let go his Integrity; we presently frame an Idea of greatness superiour to Earth- ly Kingdoms and all their fading Glories. and he that in the course of his life is steady in performing the Service of God, and never stoops to any sinfull compliance, is happy in the esteem of all that know him. Every one yeilds his Approbation, and Envy dares not cavil at, or detract from him. Even those Profligate Wretches, that have abandon'd Religion and thrown up their Pretensions to it, cannot but entertain a Just opinion of him: and as often as they look into them- selves, and take a view of their own case, they wish that their *last end may be like his*; and they even wish that their life were also like his. They are lost to an affecting sense of the Joys and Comforts of Religion; but still it extorts a veneration from them; and they are sometimes forc'd to reflect, as Creatures endued with Reason.

Numb. 23.
19.

And

And the esteem which naturally follows Integrity, is deriv'd,

Secondly, From the Excellence and Superiority that Virtue has over Vice, and this is infinitely great, and appears at the first view to all that consider it: the former, is the Perfection, the latter the Corruption of Nature: and look how different the glory of the Angels of God, is from the shame of those accurs'd Spirits, that were cast down from the mansions of Bliss, into the land of Darkness, almost so different is the state of the Righteous from that of the Wicked. Behold our first Parent walking in the garden of *Eden*, unspeakably happy in his unfullied Innocence: and behold one of his wretched Posterity, sold into the Slavery of Sin, and under the Dominion of his unruly affections; in one we see the Disgrace and Ignominy of Vice; in the other the Dignity of Virtue.

Nay we may descend lower than this; and if we compare the condition of the best of Men, with that of the Worm that crawleth upon the ground; we shall find there is a yet greater Distance between the Just and Holy man, and the Vicious and Profane, than between the most perfect of Mankind, and this mean contemptible Creature: for this has kept its appointed place, and fulfills the Will of its Creator; whereas the Sinner is fallen from his high station, and is become Despicable to Himself. He that has maintain'd his

In-

Integrity, knows that he is endued with a noble greatness of mind, that he is answering the Design of his Maker, and is *running the race which is set before him.*

Heb. 12. 1.

He examines his past Actions with Inexpressible Satisfaction, and delights to observe the beautifull Order of his Nature; his Conscience possess'd of its due Authority, his Reason seated in its Throne, and his Will and Affections paying a chearfull Obedience.

And all that live under the Influence of his Example, second the Testimony that his own heart gives him, and ratify his just Approbation. His advice is as a Law to them, and they study to please him, by an equal regard to their Duty: as *Job* speaks of himself;

Job 29. 21.
22.

unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my Counsel; after my words they spake not again, and my Speech dropp'd upon them.

But the Man that forgets the Dignity of his Nature, and descends to the Commission of a Sin, is conscious that he has done an Injury to his Faculties, and an Action that is a disgrace to him, and for which, he shall call himself a Fool for ever. He is abash'd at the Remembrance of it, and confounded at the ungratefull thought: and whilst he has any value for his honour, he would be ignorant (if possible) of his Sin, shut out himself, from being a Spectator of it, and would not that his *left hand should know what his right hand doth.*

Mat. 6. 3.

And

the constant Practice of Virtue. 9

And much more is he afraid of the Just and Holy man: for his Integrity is a Reproof to him: it cuts him to the heart with a sense of his shame, puts him in mind of the Glory that he has forfeited, and brings his Reason and Conscience to witness against him. His established Virtue rebukes him, like those faithfull Monitors, and by shewing him how he ought to live, condemns him for not living as he ought.

When Innocence appears, Vice is ashamed and would conceal it self, as the Multitude of Sinners will desire to do at the last Day, when they shall not be able to lift up their heads to behold *the Sun of Righteousness* coming forth in Mal. 4. 2. his full strength, and his *Saints sitting on* Luke 22. 30. *Thrones to judge the World.*

There needs no loud Declamation against Vice, when Virtue displays it self with boldness: its presence checks the Confidence of Sin; and the Sinner looks down with Confusion of Face: his Guilt reproves it self, and cries out, in the words of *Ahab*, *hast thou* 1 Kings 21. 20. *found me O mine Enemy?* He is seiz'd with a prevailing Awe, and his mouth is stopp'd while the Godly are in his sight. Hence it is, that the Patrons of Irreligion suspend the Commission of their beloved Iniquity in the presence of a good Man.

They forbear for a while the language of Blasphemy and Profaneness, and by an involuntary veneration, are withheld from Evil. Were they in the Company of those that are
equally

equally regardless of God, they could glory in their Wickedness, and vaunt themselves against the Most High. But they dare not be thus vile before the Man of Integrity, whose frowns are terrible to them, and who chastises them for their Impiety, barely by not partaking with it. Before such a Witness, they take up the Profession of Religion, and would borrow the Reputation that certainly attends it. And this Respect which Righteousness commands, arises,

Thirdly, From the likeness it bears to the the Divine Attributes. It is a Token of God's especial Presence, that sheds a Glory upon him, that daily aspires to a nearer resemblance of his Holiness. Every good Action is a Copy of one or other of those Perfections which God has manifested to us: and he that is distinguish'd by an unmoveable Resolution to do his Duty, and by repeated conquests of the most inviting Temptations, has something truly great and Godlike in him, that engages our Observation and bespeaks our Esteem: and those faithfull Servants of God, that are adorn'd with the Beams of his goodness, are also cloath'd with Majesty, and it is their Defence and Protection; for even their Ene-

Gen. 26.28.

mies see certainly that the Lord is with them, and desire to be joyn'd in the same interests that they may partake of God's Blessing. 'Twas this that obtain'd Mercy for Joseph, when he was falsely accus'd and cast into Prison;

th
fon;
God
of th
Cho
wron
from
by t
not n
And
Rig
to e
vent
ther
thor
ther
awa
they
awa
is in
is th
Tha
has
of
and
tain
A
bol
tre
dif
and
ligh
ney
of

the constant Practice of Virtue. FF

son; and this, together with the working of
 God's Providence, *gave him Favour in the sight* Gen. 39. 21.
of the Keeper of the Prison. This preserv'd his
 Chosen People, and *suffer'd no man to do them* Pf. 105. 13.
wrong, as they went from one Nation to another, 14. 15.
from one Kingdom to another People; for God did
 by this, as it were, *speak unto them, touch*
not mine Anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.
 And they that have design'd to injure the
 Righteous Man, and been armed with Power,
 to execute their Purpose, have been pre-
 vented by a surprizing dread, which has bid
 them *have nothing to do with that Just man.* Mat. 27. 19. The
 thought of the intended Villany has shock'd
 them; and his invincible Virtue has taken
 away the strength of their Resolutions. And
 they were astonish'd as *Jacob was,* when he
awaked out of his sleep, and said, surely the Lord Gen. 28. 17.
is in this Place, and I knew it not; how dreadfull
is this place? this is none other but the House of God;
This is the Gate of Heaven. When Integrity
 has stood unshaken against the utmost Efforts
 of the Ungodly, their Hatred is vanquish'd;
 and they do Justice to him that has main-
 tain'd it, with *certainly this is a Righteous Man.* Luke 23.
 A powerfull Sinner has been afraid of his 47.
 bold Reprover, and a licentious Judge has
 trembled before his Prisoner. For Religion Acts 24. 25.
 difarms and strikes an Awe upon its Enemies;
 and it dazles and confounds them, as the
light from Heaven did St. Paul, as he was *Jour-* Acts 9. 3.
neying to Damascus, to persecute the Church
 of God.

It

It is a lively Proof of God's Power over the minds of Men, that, even they that hate him cannot with-hold the Respect and Esteem that are due to the Resemblance of him; and as soon as they see his *Image and Superscription*, they cannot but *render unto God, the things that are God's.*

Mat. 22.20,
21.

And the most obstinate Prejudice is pierc'd thro' by the beautifull Simplicity of Truth and Innocence, which is,

Fourthly, to be consider'd. How much soever Mankind may disagree in other matters, how unwilling soever they may be to agree in this; yet they with one Consent, acknowledge the Excellence of Truth, and the real Worth of Innocence. Sincerity gains access, by its natural Efficacy; it needs no Arts to recommend it; but is therefore most acceptable, because it is without Art, or Design.

There is no Character more desireable, more generally belov'd, than, that of a Plain honest Man: it enters into the hearts of all with an irresistible Force, like the Gospel of *Christ*, which obtain'd a ready assent to it self, by its glaring Evidence: it was not set off with a Pompous shew of Eloquence, or the
 2 Cor. 2. 4. *enticing words of Man's Wisdom*; but trusted to its own Power, and appear'd as it really was, in a simple, unaffected Narration.

An impartial regard to Truth, and a steadfast Resolution of doing our Duty, are infinitely more valuable in themselves, than all the

th
 the a
 able
 has
 men
 plau
 the
 brac
 T
 Enen
 care
 thei
 soft
 B
 are
 latte
 and
 the
 and
 it sh
 fesse
 a pr
 pear
 seif
 can
 but
 Sin
 desp
 to t
 the
 a tr
 pre
 S
 dev

the acquir'd Ornaments, and the most fashionable Rules of Conversation; and a good Man, has something truly engaging in his Deportment, that pleases more Effectually than the plausible Civilities and seeming Courtesy of the fine Gentleman, and the ensnaring Embraces, and fair Promises of the Courtier.

The World may sometimes think him their *Enemy*, because he *tells them the truth*, and may Gal. 4. 16. caress the Flatterer, that distinguishes away their Guilt, and covers their Vices with a softer Name.

But they hate the former only whilst they are Enemies to themselves, and employ the latter, just while he gives them a little ease, and lulls them into a deceitfull Security. But there is nothing more odious than Flattery; and whilst it labours to conceal its Baseness, it shews the Excellence of Truth, and confesses, that it is amiable in the Eyes even of a prejudic'd Spectator; for it puts on the Appearance of it, and studies to be unlike it self; for the Mind tho' vicious and deprav'd, cannot relish fulsom, and undisguis'd Flattery, but rejects it with abhorrence. And the Sinner looks down with Contempt upon the despicable Wretch that prostitutes his Reason to the service of a Lie, and renders himself the most vile and abject of Creatures, to form a transitory Interest, or purchase a forc'd and pretended Approbation.

Such is the value of Truth, that they that deviate from it, must seem to adhere to it;
and

and the most skillfull Flatterer tries to persuade the Person, he commends, that he has certainly those Virtues, which he falsely ascribes to him: his commendation is as nought, unless it passes for truth, and his Designs are disappointed, unless he is believ'd. How far preferable then is Truth, which stands on a sure foundation, and does not court an uncertain Opinion, a precarious Esteem; which always pleases, when the mind sees it, as it is, and which prepares and forces the way to Acceptance, even through the grossest Prejudice!

Which leads me, *Lastly*, To derive the Observation on the Text, from the impartial Judgment that Wicked men make of things in their sober Intervals, and whenever they are brought to themselves.

Their Sins having the Ascendant over them are generally regarded in the first Place; and every thing that offers it self, is consider'd as agreeable to, or inconsistent with them. Their Representation is receiv'd by the injur'd Faculties of the Mind, and it is compell'd to assent to their unnatural Interpretation: For we (say they) *are they that ought to speak, for we are Lords over them.* And whilst they are tied and bound in this miserable Slavery, the sight of a Just and Holy man, provokes and inflames them; they are gall'd with his Reproofs, and break out into Opprobrious Language.

Whilst

Whilst they are warm in the Pursuit of their suppos'd Pleasures, they cannot bear the least Interruption, they are too impatient to hearken to Reason.

But there are some Seasons in which they may be spoken withall; when their Affections are cool, and they are wearied with the Service of Sin, they begin to consider the Example that was set before them, the pathetical Exhortations of the Preacher of Righteousness, the holy vehemence with which he applied himself to them, and the affectionate Concern wherewith he intreated them. And they think with themselves; surely he was in earnest; we indeed mock'd at his Persuasions, and made a Jest of our Calamity; but now we acknowledge, that he spoke the truth, because he was thoroughly convinc'd of it, and express'd a compassion towards us, out of a sincere regard to us, and a just sense of our Danger; we rejected him as our Enemy, but we unreasonably accounted him so, since he deals with us no otherwise than with himself, and advises us to act as he believes we ought to do, according to his best Judgment of things, and the rule of his own Practice; why then should we violate our purest Sentiments, by injuring the Man who bears a good will to us, and discharges the most difficult Offices of Friendship, by rescuing us out of our own hands, and telling us we are Enemies to our Immortal Souls?

These

These thoughts naturally occur to them, when they are dispos'd to consider, and make a right estimate of things; Then they pay a deference to Him that holds fast the Truth, and answers its Obligations, much rather than to those that have conspir'd to degrade themselves: and unless they are totally blinded, they will at one time or other endeavour to make amends for their Profane Jest and Railery by treating the better part of Mankind with Reverence, and despising those *that run into the same excess of Riot with them.*

Having gone through the several particulars propos'd, I am perswaded that you have already drawn such Inferences, as arise from them, and have prevented me in the Application.

Let me only mention, the great Example of Righteousness, whom we this Day commemorate, and the remarkable Effect which his Life and Doctrine had upon *Herod*; and you will resolve to keep your Integrity, and glory in a brave Profession of Religion; you will be animated and encouraged by the hopes of bringing Piety into Fashion, and putting a stop, to the spreading Contagion, and the vaunting Confidence of Sin.

Consider, with how swift a Progress, Religion would prevail in the World, were not Men ashamed of that which is their greatest Glory, were they as bold and resolute in Owning the Practice of Religion, as others
are

are in propagating the corrupt Notions, and vicious Manners of the Age.

Consider the powerfull Influence of Holiness, in that *Herod fear'd John*, for this very reason, because *he was a just man and an holy*; when at the same time, he was able to banish him from his presence and procure the quiet Enjoyment of his Sin. What a mighty Efficacy then would Holiness have, did those of the highest Ranks and Fortunes, *let their Light* Mat. 3. 16. *shine before Men*, it would be beautifully terrible to the Combination of Sinners, and chase away Immorality and Profaneness. Did they know the Dignity of Virtue, they would not so easily recede from it. They are carried away by the false Maxims of Honour, and yield to the Clamours of a sinfull Generation; to gain their Esteem, and acquire a vain Applause.

Whereas the most likely way to be truly *ap- prov'd of Men*, is, first to be *acceptable with God*; and did they insist upon, and stedfastly preserve their Virtue, the World would be at length brought over to them, and entertain the same Sentiments of Things.

They only betray themselves, by departing from *the old Paths* of Virtue, and discover a Jer. 6. 16. low contemptible Spirit, by a mean Compliance and a Servile Imitation.

Did they adhere to their Profession, and adorn it with a suitable Practice, they would be admir'd for their noble Resolution, and their Example would be esteem'd as a Law.

The Esteem that attends &c.

And how much more becoming is it, to do their Duty, and obtain that Respect, which is deriv'd from the Natural sense of Good and Evil, from the Excellence of Virtue, from the likeness it bears to the Divine Attributes, from the beautifull Simplicity of Truth and Innocence, and from the impartial Judgment of Wicked men, when they are brought to themselves; than to be govern'd by Humour and Custom, by the perverse Wills, and wild Caprice of unreasonable Men?

For these are more uncertain than their own vain Breath, and their Applause will perish sooner than a Blast.

But Virtue will recommend us to God's unerring Approbation; and what he determines is fix'd and certain, for *it is done in Truth and Equity.*

And all that have any Regard to Reason, will second his Judgment, and the Approbation of our Conscience, and even they that behold Goodness afar off, will admire it. And when the end of all things is come, our Character will remain untainted; and God will do honour to us before an innumerable Multitude; and *there shall be no speech nor language but what shall speak our Praise.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore.

*The Duty and Advantages of
Sincerity.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the

PARISH-CHURCH

OF

St. PETER's in the East,

O X F O R D.

Pfalm XV. 2.

— *And speaketh the truth from
his heart.*

THE Laws of God are imprinted upon the Nature of Man, and written in *the tables of our hearts*. But alafs we soon deface the Imprefion, and the glorious Characters are quickly loft, becaufe they are written but in Duft. So great is their value that they ought to be

The Duty and Advantages

engraven upon Marble with a pen of a Diamond. But why do I speak of Marble? for That also perishes, and *the Tables of Stone were broken.*

But the Laws of God shall never fail; His Fingers have committed them to a Record that shall never be blotted out; and he will preserve them in everlasting Characters in the Book of Life. There every Line is a Ray of Glory, and every Branch of our Duty, is a Beam of *That Sun which shall never withdraw his Light.*

Till we can read it in That Divine Original, we cannot desire to behold a fairer Copy of it, than appears in the *Psalms* which is now before us. Surely if ever the *Heart* of the *Psalmist* indited a good matter, if ever his *Tongue* was the *Pen* of a ready *Writer*, it was in this excellent Portion of Scripture. In this he surpass'd the rest of the Children of Men; *full of Grace were his Lips*, and they dropp'd the Dew of Heaven.

What Wisdom may we learn from that Important Question! *Lord who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle? or who shall rest upon thy holy Hill?* And what Satisfaction may we receive from that Faithfull Answer which the Spirit of God return'd to him, or which, through his direction he return'd to himself! *Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt Life, and doth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.*

Every word that goes before the Text, and every word that follows it, deserves our

Par-

Particular consideration; But let me at this time dwell upon The Amiable Virtue of Truth and Sincerity; or rather *Let this be our Rest for ever, Here let us dwell and have a delight therein.*

That you may *ascend to the Holy Place by speaking the Truth from your Heart*; I shall

First Endeavour to direct you in the Performance of this Duty, And

Secondly, To shew the Advantages of it.

That you may perform it aright you should

1st Consider the Folly and Baseness of Insincerity.

2dly, You should cleanse your Minds from corrupt and vicious Thoughts.

3dly, You should possess them with Just and Honourable Principles. And

4thly, You should speak from the ground of your Hearts, without any intention of ensnaring or betraying your Neighbour.

And *1st*, You should consider the Folly and Baseness of Insincerity.

Great is the Folly of those Men *that leave the Paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of Darkeness*. Their exquisite Subtilty serves as often to puzzle and perplex themselves, as to entangle others. They are lost in the intricate maze of Deceit, and cannot find a way to escape out of the circle which they have artfully drawn. They make no progress by engaging in indirect courses, but are carried

The Duty and Advantages

to and fro by their crooked and perverse dealings, like the winding Stream, that turns back upon it self, and the swifter it runs, so much the sooner, it comes again to its Fountain.

The Path of the Just is as the shining Light, to invite and lead them on to Happiness; and they that have learnt the wisdom of Integrity are directed by the same Heavenly Guide, as *went before the Children of Israel in a pillar of Fire*, and conducted them safely, through the mighty Waters, and the barren Wilderness. But they that follow their own treacherous Policy, and plunge themselves into the depths of Iniquity, are led astray by an uncertain Guide, that resembles the wandering Vapour of the Night, which trains on the mistaken Traveller, till he falls from a Precipice, or sinks into the Mire. They cannot fix upon a sure Foundation, but are constrain'd to shift and change their place, *finding no rest for the sole of their Foot.*

Their Insincerity still wants a veil to cover it, for if it once appears, its sordid designs are defeated. But how hard is it to cover it effectually! Though the disguise be curiously wrought, it will soon be worn out, and require another pretence, to conceal its failure; and even the endeavour to conceal it, frequently betrays it, and the Smoke shews that the Flame is stifled.

There can be no Peace in this forc'd, unnatural State; fresh disquiets are always rising
in

in the Mind; and while the Heart is treacherous, *the Temples of the Head can take no rest*, For they that are conscious to themselves that they are working mischief, must also be apprehensive of the fatal discovery. Amidst the many cross-ways of dishonesty, they know not which to choose, for in every one, they expect to meet an Adversary. And many indeed there are, as Industrious to find them out, as they are, to prevent it.

Such is the folly of Infincerity, if we consider it with respect only to men! But how much greater is it, since there is an All-seeing God *with whom we have to do! his Eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun, beholding all the ways of Men, and considering the most secret parts: he knew all things ere ever they were created, so also after they were perfected, he look'd upon them all.* Heb. 4. 13. Eccles. 23.²⁹

He sees every spring and movement of the Heart, and observes every Passion that stirs within it, when it is sowr'd with the rancour of settled hatred, prey'd upon by *the never-dying Worm* of Inveterate malice, swell'd and disturb'd with envy, or inclin'd to blast our Neighbours Reputation, by calumny and detraction.

No cloud or darkness can screen our thoughts from his view; They would all distinctly appear before him, *though they were more than the Sea, and our counsels were profounder than the great Deep.*

Though

The Duty and Advantages

Though our Heart were Doubled and folded up with the most artfull Fraud, *Yet as a Vesture he would unfold it.*

He despises the admir'd contrivances of the consummate Villian, and laughs him to scorn; *he frustrateth the designs of the Liars, and maketh them mad; he turneth Wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.* And Insincerity must be allow'd to be no less base than foolish, the Perfidious themselves being Judges.

Every Sin casts a blemish and dishonour upon our Nature, and covers us with shame and confusion. But This is more especially shamefull, and as it proceeds from a mean, abject Spirit, so it writes fear and suspicion upon the face, and sets a mark on the sordid Wretch that is guilty of it. He calls for the darkness to spread it self over him, studies to pass unobserv'd, and lurks in secret places: whilst no one but God and his own Soul is privy to his design, he distrusts every step that he takes, and dreads every Man that meets him, as if he would proclaim his disgrace.

Even the pretended Advocates for Honour, declare the Baseness of Lying and Falsehood. For to give a Man the Lye, is in their esteem an unpardonable affront, a reflection that can be wash'd out by nothing but blood, an offence that cannot be expiated by any thing, but the sacrifice and death of the Offender.

And

And if the groundless Imputation of Lying is so foul a Blot, How great is the weight of Guilt and Infamy that falls upon them who deserve the charge! and if they cannot bear to be accus'd of it without reason, should they not be afraid to give reason for the Accusation?

If you consider the Persons with whom you deal treacherously, you must necessarily be sensible of the vileness of your proceeding, and look upon the odious Practice with Loathing and Abhorrence.

If they are Honest and Sincere, as probably They are; for they are the Persons that are most easily wrought upon, the least suspicions of your baseness, and therefore the most expos'd to it; Think with your selves, how unnatural it is, to make a prey of such Ingenuous Tempers, and privately Injure them, while they Innocently breath forth their thoughts, and *pour out their hearts* before you.

Their Sincerity bespeaks your tenderest regard, and you offer violence to your selves, and put off your Humanity, when you betray them. They alafs entertain a kind opinion of you, and perswade themselves, they may safely put their confidence in you And you (if you are false to them) stab them to the heart, while they are leaning upon your Breasts, and knitting their Soul with yours. If you can proceed to such Villany as this, you may also murder the Guest, that begs
pro-

The Duty and Advantages

protection for a night under your Roof, or you may Imbrue your Hands in the Blood of the harmless Infant in the midst of its Peacefull sleep.

But supposing that the Persons, you are dealing with, are themselves Insincere, and you flatter your selves, that you are only acting the defensive part, and fighting with their own weapons, yet even then you are self-condemn'd. You are provok'd by their treachery, and are you therefore treacherous? you justly abhor their practice, and yet imitate the practice you abhor.

The Consequences of Falsehood are most pernicious in the important Affairs of Life; and it has also a balefull Influence upon our common Conversation. It entirely destroys the chearfulness of it, and strikes an uncomfortable damp upon it: there can be no pleasure in conversing together, if we are always afraid of being betray'd.

And we are expos'd to Dangers arising from Tempers seemingly different. For one man appears free and open, and encourages us to speak in the same free and open manner. His design in the mean time is base, to take off the restraints of caution that keep us in safety, and to draw us off from our Guard; as the subtle Commander advances and offers Battle, that he may encourage his Adversary to leave his Places of strength and fight to his disadvantage.

An-

Another man lies on the reserve to watch for every slip and failing, and make a dishonest use of those Indiscretions which he observes, and yet does not seem to observe in others. Thus we fall into the hands of those that lie in wait for us, and are compass'd about with Enemies where none were expected.

Dreadfull was that state of War which Impious men have falsely suppos'd to be the state of Nature: yet it were better for us to live in that dreadfull State, always apprehensive of open Violence, than to be always liable to be surpriz'd by secret Treachery.

Wretched is the condition of that People, whose *Tongue is an Arrow shot out, it speaketh* Jer. 9. 8. *deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his Neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.*

That you may never incur this heinous charge, but may copy after him, *in whose Lips there was found no Guile*, you should Secondly Cleanse your Minds from corrupt and vicious Thoughts. For if the Fountain be clean, the Streams that flow from it, will be pure from Sin; but if This be corrupt, it will send forth the Waters of bitterness, and taint the whole course of your Actions.

The Heart is the root and foundation either of Good or Evil; and if this be unsound, and has a canker lurking within it, you cannot safely rely upon it: and how fair soever your professions are, they are no more than an empty pretence, or a specious covering, that

The Duty and Advantages

that makes a shew for a time, and then like blasted Fruit, turns to decay.

As therefore you would deal sincerely with one another, you should carefully put away every unreasonable prejudice against your Neighbour: for prejudice perverts the Judgment, and misguides the Will, and gives an evil tincture to all your Thoughts, Words, and Actions.

Envy is another pernicious Quality, that disposes men to perfidious Dealing, and inclines them to lay trains and snares to injure the Person that is the Object of it.

And Malice is always engag'd in the strictest alliance with Falsehood; and as they are the distinguishing Characters of the Accursed Spirit, so they have the most prevailing influence over the vile wretched Man that delights in the subtle Arts of doing mischief.

And though they may seem less dangerous, yet you cannot too strictly guard against an Arrogant opinion of your own Wisdom, and a vain contempt of the simplicity of others. For These have prevail'd with many to Double and Prevaricate, who yet were above the sordid temptations of Avarice, and had no other motive to it, but only a fond opinion of their shrewd, dextrous conduct.

It is this that has mov'd them to practice upon the easy credulity of well-meaning men; to open their hearts by the false key of crafty Insinuations, and to make the basest use of the confidence which is unwarily put in them.

It

It is this that has fill'd them with an ill-natur'd pleasure, when they have taken the Ignorant in the snares which they have curiously wrought, and made them insensible of the nets that are cast about them.

But amidst the many evil thoughts that corrupt the Mind, you ought most especially to beware of those that tend to Covetousness. For if this Vice has gotten the dominion over you, it will tempt you not only to betray your Brother, but to sell your Soul.

It was this that influenc'd the Accursed Judas, when he reprov'd Mary for Anointing the feet of Jesus with very costly Oyntment, and pretended that it might be better employ'd, if it were sold, and the price of it given to the Poor. John 12. 5. This he said not that he cared for the Poor, but⁶ because he was a thief and had the bag, and bore what was put therein.

And it was this that had a fatal effect upon him, when he betray'd his Friend and his Saviour by a Kiss, and deliver'd himself to Perdition for Thirty peices of Silver. Mat. 26. 15.

This, I hope, is sufficient to engage you to cleanse your Minds from corrupt and vicious Thoughts, and in the Third place, to possess them with Just and Honourable Principles.

And one of the best Principles that can be fix'd and planted in you, is a sincere value for Truth, and a due regard to your Word.

Truth naturally recommends it self to the Mind, and appears with an amiable Beauty, though

The Duty and Advantages

though it has no other charms but its own simplicity. This Virtue is most especially sweet to the Soul, and demands your love and veneration with a mighty force and Authority. And its Authority should be held as sacred for ever; no corrupt Breath should taint it, no faithless Tongue should violate it. By its Bands the Members of Society are held together; and every other tie must fail, and all relations be dissolv'd, if this be destroy'd.

Without This there is no safety in Commerce, no pleasure in Conversation, no dependance upon Friendship, no valuable alliance even in Blood.

And if you have a just value for your selves, you cannot but regard your word. And it is then highly worthy of the regard of others, when Truth is stamp'd upon it.

The Tongue is then a glorious Member; and the Faculty of Speech is applied to the noblest use, when it faithfully conveys so rich a Treasure.

The words of Truth are like the purest Metal bearing the Royal Image. And they are not question'd and receiv'd with suspicion and distrust, but pass with undoubted Authority, and gain entire credit, as soon as it is known *what Image and Superscription they bear.*

A Generous Scorn and Abhorrence of Falsehood is another Principle almost as powerfull as a Just value for Truth. For it has often happily restrain'd Men from the base
practices

practices of Deceit, though they have fallen a prey to other Temptations; and though many Vices have taken possession of them, yet they have withheld themselves from Perfidious Dealing, because they loath'd and disdain'd it. And where Conscience seems to have lost its power, Generosity and Honour have in some measure supplied its place, and forbid them to do a dishonest Action.

And there is certainly a Respect due to those, in whom there are these remains of Virtue: and though they ought to be blam'd for being Enemies to themselves, in committing other sinfull Actions, yet we should give them their deserv'd praise (and much they certainly deserve) for abstaining from *the sins of Unfaithfulness*.

If you possess your selves with Benevolence and Humility, these Principles also will engage you to be strictly Just. They will incline you to serve your Brethren with chearfulness, and promote their Interest with Fidelity.

While you preserve a tender concern for them, and are stedfastly resolv'd to perform every good Office that lies in your power, no villanous thought can enter into your Breast, no Arts of Deceit can gain Access to you. For these proceed from Malice and Ill Nature, and cannot be entertain'd with pleasure by any one that does not delight in doing mischief.

But

The Duty and Advantages

But while you endeavour to make every Man your Friend, and to shew your selves Friends to every Man, you cannot secretly violate their Interest, or conceive a thought of being false and Injurious to them, without Indignation. Since the *mouth speaketh out of the abundance of the heart*, you should enrich it with virtuous Principles, and furnish it with the treasures of Goodness; and then you will

Fourthly Speak from the ground of your hearts, without any Intention of ensnaring or betraying your Neighbour. This alone can raise you to the character that is drawn by the Psalmist; if your words proceed from the depth of your heart, and are directed to a good end.

For this comprehends every thing that is valuable in Speech; and without this, your words are either trifling, or heinously evil: for unless the Heart guides you, they are sleight and superficial, and no more than the vain froth and overflowing of the Lips; They are of no use or signification; and happy were it, if they were regarded as little, by him that hears, as by those that speak them.

But This is the least Abuse of Words, and not to be compar'd with the Guilt of those that flow from a Base and Treacherous Design.

In discharging the Duty of Sincerity, it is not necessary to speak the whole Truth in every place, and lay open the entire state of your Mind to every one that desires to look into

into
and
sister

It
Hear
perfe
ther
ship

W
Conc
care
and
zekia
silver
oyntm
that

the K
way
noth
with

Br
requ
shoul
it wi
rupt

A
allay
heart
believ
one s

W
ture
the
Se

into it. We ought to keep a guard upon it, and communicate no more of it than is consistent with Prudence and Safety.

It is sufficient to open the first room in our Hearts, to those with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted, and to let them in farther by degrees, as our Intimacy and Friendship are gradually improv'd.

When an Insinuating spie is observing our Conduct with an evil curiosity, we should take care to disappoint his traiterous Intentions, and not rashly disclose our thoughts, as *Hezekiah shew'd the house of his precious things, the silver, the gold, and the spices, and the precious oyntment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures to the servants of the King of Babylon.* I sai. 39. 2. The safest and the justest way of Acting, in such a case, is to impart nothing but Truth, and to conceal nothing with an insincere and villanous reserve.

But there are many cases in which we are requir'd to speak the whole Truth, and we should not keep back any part of it, or cover it with any disguise, or blend it with any corruption.

As it is pure in it self, and without any allay, we should deliver it *with singleness of heart*, and imitate *the multitude of them that first believ'd in Christ, who were of one heart and one soul.* Acts 4. 32.

When a positive promise is made the Nature of it should be fully consider'd: it gives the Person to whom it is made, an absolute

The Duty and Advantages

right to the thing that is promis'd: and to deny it him utterly, is a palpable Injury; to withhold it longer than the time appointed, or *put it off from day to day*, is an unnatural cruelty, and a barbarous abuse of the expectation which we have rais'd and encourag'd.

Perhaps his whole dependance rests upon it, and every disappointment tortures and afflicts him.

The Heart is a Joynt-witness with God, and if it retracts or disowns the engagement, it contradicts the testimony of him, who will prove and confirm it, by Infinite vengeance.

When we endeavour to recommend ourselves to each other by professions of Kindness, we should really bear the Kindness we profess: for unless this accompanies them, they are but as *clouds without water, and trees without fruit*. This is their best estate!

But if they are made not only without Kindness, but with a wicked Intention, to ensnare the Man that believes them, and accomplish his ruin, which cannot be so effectually brought to pass, by open Enmity, Mat. 23. 27. they are then *like to whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautifull outward, but are within full of dead mens bones and of all uncleanness*. And they also in another respect resemble *the tombs* which were inhabited of old by them that were possess'd of Devils.

We cannot take too much care that our Professions be sincere; For as they naturally rise to a higher degree, they will accordingly be

be attended by greater aggravations, if they proceed from a deceitfull heart.

Then only may we trust our selves, and be believ'd by others, when they are what they seem to be, and deserve the credit which we desire to obtain.

That you may *Speak the Truth from your Heart*, I shall *Secondly* shew the Advantages of this Duty. And it is no small Advantage of it, that it gains us esteem, and gives force and Authority to all our Dealings.

Considering the mutual Benefits that we enjoy, as Members of Society, we cannot but delight to pursue the means that convey those Benefits to us. Nothing does more effectually convey them, than the trust and confidence which is put in us. Nothing confirms that Trust and confidence more than a good Reputation. And nothing more certainly gives us a good Reputation than the experience of our Honesty and Integrity.

Even Those that have too little regard to Truth and Sincerity in their own practice, are yet constrain'd to admire it in others, and are best satisfied in themselves, when they deal with a faithfull Man, and commit their most Important concerns to a Breast that will not betray them.

If we pass from the Necessary Affairs of Life to the Innocent Pleasures of our Ordinary Conversation, even Those Pleasures derive all their sweetness from Sincerity: when

The Duty and Advantages

we are wearied with the business of the day, and are willing to refresh our selves with the Conversation of our Friends and Acquaintance; How agreeable and delightfull is the Refreshment, when there is no suspicion of falsehood, no danger of opening our Minds too far, no fear of being taken in the snares of Perfidious men!

Our Happiness may then be compar'd to That of our First Parents, when they walk'd forth in the Garden of *Eden*, the Air being Pure and untainted, and the Flowers breathing forth Innocent Odours.

Great also is the Advantage of Sincerity, in giving or receiving Counsel or Advice: and this is absolutely necessary to direct each other through the dangerous Wilderness of this World: it fills us with Comfort and *Joy unspeakable*, to meet with a faithfull Friend, that leads us in the right way, or fairly tells us that we have departed from it.

When the Mind is distracted with uncertain and perplexing Thoughts, how seasonable and welcome are Those Admonitions which proceed from an honest Heart, and a full purpose of promoting our welfare! They are as agreeable and refreshing as the *streams that flow'd from the stony rock*. And while we enjoy them, our case is like that of *the Woman of Samaria* when she conversed with the Blessed *Jesus* who *was able to give her a well of water springing up into everlasting Life*.

Joh. 4. 14.

But

But how dreadful are the consequences of false and insincere Advice! it leads us into straits and difficulties that we may perish in them, as the Thief and Murderer directs the Ignorant Traveller into the narrow passages, that he may surprize and murder him there.

And when we are compell'd to dwell in the Tents of unfaithfulness, we are as miserable as Those that are compass'd about with the Pestilence; when the very Air they breath in, spreads the Infection, and the Fountains that should quench their Thirst, inflame it.

But hoping better things of you, I shall farther endeavour to recommend Sincerity, as it engages the Good will of Mankind, and inclines them to favour and protect the Man that holds fast his Integrity. The Influences of it are very extensive, and reach even to them that do not practice the Virtue: it restrains their hands from violence, and forbids them to injure so sacred a Character.

And the satisfaction that possesses our minds, the pleasure that rises within us, is a yet stronger inducement to this Duty. Since we cannot but reflect upon our past conduct, it nearly concerns us so to live, that we may delight in our reflections. Every Virtue does indeed conduce to it, but none more effectually than Sincerity.

When we look into our Breasts, how comfortable is it, to find no *Accursed thing to trouble us*, no base perfidious Thought to rise

The Duty and Advantages

in Judgment against us, no dishonest Action to upbraid us!

The Pure and Virtuous Soul that is adorn'd with Sincerity, appears like *the Beauty of Holiness*, or the *Tabernacle of God*, when *his Glory rested upon it*; or (if we may bring any thing into comparison with the Innocent *Jesus*) we might compare it with *the Lamb of God*, in that glorious view, when *the Holy Spirit was seen Descending like a Dove, and Lighting upon him*.

Mat. 3. 16.

With what Joy and Triumph did the Faithfull *Samuel* appeal to the whole Assembly of *Israel*, when he was old and grey-headed, and had walk'd before them from his child-hood to that day!

And how fully was the voice of his Conscience confirm'd, by the united voice of the People: *Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, nor taken ought of any man's hand*.

1 Sam. 12. 4.

Our rejoicing is this says the great Apostle *St Paul* the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God we have had our conversation in the World.

2 Cor. 1. 12.

What Peace did he speak to himself! with what courage did he speak to his Flock! *Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behav'd our selves among you that believe*.

2 Theff. 2. 10.

So many are the Advantages of Sincerity in this World, that it is almost unnecessary to draw any Arguments from the other. But
if

if th
with
Hov
Hea
A
spea
the
Hil
I
but
unc
Cor
B
face
we
I
to l
Sup
step
Hea
A
ligh
Mo
whi
V
whi
Fir
sha
An
wil
the
all
Gu

if they are great, as it possesses the Mind with Peace, and brings down Heaven to us, How much greater are they, as it raises us to Heaven!

And this we are assur'd it will, For *He that speaketh the Truth from his heart, shall dwell in the Tabernacle of God, and rest upon his Holy Hill.*

In this present State, we see each other, but through a Glass darkly, and can pass only uncertain Judgments, and make but sleight Conjectures.

But in the other, we shall see God himself face to face, and be liable to no mistake, since we shall always behold *the Fountain of Light.*

It was the Particular happiness of St John, to lean upon our Saviour's Breast, at his Last Supper upon Earth. But if we tread in his steps, we shall lie for ever in his Bosom in Heaven.

And he will perfectly reveal to us, the delightful Truths, which he spake with his Mouth, and which fell from those Lips, in which there was no Guile.

We shall converse with the spotless Souls, which were Redeem'd from among Men, being the *First-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.* We shall enjoy the Friendship of Angels and Arch-Angels, who delight to proclaim their Good will to Men. Rev. 14. 4.

And the Heavens shall open to receive us into the Company of the Blessed Nathanael, and all other True Israelites, in whom there was no Guile. John 1. 47.

Having

The Duty and Advantages

Having endeavour'd to direct you in the practice of Sincerity, and shewn the Advantages of it, let me leave the whole upon your Thoughts in the words of St Paul.

Phil. 4. 8.
9.

Finally my Brethren, whatsoever Things are True, whatsoever Things are Honest, whatsoever Things are Just, whatsoever Things are Pure, whatsoever Things are Lovely, whatsoever Things are of Good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think of these things; and the God of Peace shall be with you.



The

*The Effectual Influence of the Love
of Christ.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY

O F

OXFORD,

At St PETER's, in Lent.

2 Cor. V. 14.

*For the Love of Christ constrain-
eth us —*

OUR Saviour Christ having pur-
chas'd to himself a Church with his
precious Blood, mercifully looks up-
on the same, and bears that tender
compassion towards all its Members, with which
his Bowells yern'd over Them, when he hung
upon the Cross, dying for Their Redemption.

Serm. III.

That

The Effectual Influence

That our Repentance may be accepted at the Throne of Grace, he presents his Body broken, and his Blood shed, to his Father, who is well pleas'd with the perfect Sacrifice of his Beloved Son.

And while he is pleading in our behalf in the Presence of God, the Holy Spirit intreats and sollicitus us to have compassion on our Souls, and Intercedes for us, with our selves.

And when the whole Trinity is engag'd in the work of Reconciliation, shall we continue Inexorable, and reject the gracious overtures of Infinite Love?

When the Crucified Jesus invites us, in the most endearing manner, to embrace them, even for his sake, and for the sake of those pains that he suffer'd for us; surely *this Love of Christ must constrain us* to give up our selves to him, who endur'd the Agonies of a Thousand Deaths, to make us Heirs of Eternal Life.

And if we are truly gratefull, we shall not rest here. For it is the intention of our Redeemer, that the same Principle of Love and Charity, which is in him our Head, should diffuse it self through all his Members.

And if we are sensible of the high value that he has set on an Immortal Soul, and the Immense Price that he has paid for *our Ransom*; our Zeal for his Service will not be confin'd to our selves, but we shall be ready to promote the Salvation of others.

It was this glorious Principle, that animated the Disciples of *Jesus*, and carried them undaunted, through *Afflictions, Necessities, Distresses*. It was this that almost wrought them up into the Activity of the Angels of God, and made these *his* Earthly *Ministers* also, a *Flaming Fire*. 2 Cor. 6. 4.
Pf. 104. 4.

They desir'd no conquest, but over Sin, and Satan; no happiness in this World, but the Pleasure of saving Souls. And for this they encountred Death in all the shapes that the most Ingenious malice could Invent; and triumph'd over the wanton cruelty of their Enemies. *For the Love of Christ constraineth us*, (says St Paul) *because we thus Judge, that if One died for All, then were All Dead: and that he died for All, that they which Live, should not henceforth Live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.* 2 Cor. 5.
14, 15.

Whether the Love of *Christ* is taken for that transcendent Affection, which he has shewn to Mankind; or for a Devout sense of it, in us; it is the same thing in effect. And the obvious meaning of the words is this; That a true sense of the Love of Christ, will constrain us to devote our Life to him, and to promote the Salvation of our Brethren.

That this Flame may be kindled in our Breasts, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, The nature of the Duties, which it will constrain us to perform. And,

Se-

The Effectual Influence

Secondly, The Arguments, by which it will constrain us.

And *First*, The nature of the Duties, which it will constrain us to perform. All the Obedience that can be paid, in a short and uncertain Life, is due to him, from whom we receiv'd the power of performing it. And his right to it, is confirm'd by the strongest Obligations, since he has rescued us from the slavery of the Devil, and vouchsaf'd to enforce our imperfect Services with his own All-sufficient Merits.

And if we once consider, what our wonderful Redemption imports, and how much we owe to *the Lord of Life*, for emptying himself into *the form of a Servant*, and stooping to the most wretched circumstances of Disgrace and Misery, that he might raise us out of the depth of Despair, to Happiness, which no Language can express, no Imagination can reach; it cannot but be our Study, our Ambition to please him; our Soul will always be on the wing towards Heaven, and Ascend in every Thought, as a Tribute of Gratitude to the Lover of Souls.

We cannot repine at any part of our Duty, when his Assistance is the Life of our Endeavours; when his Blood gives them all their worth and efficacy; and his Goodness has prepar'd a Reward of *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. All that he expects, is a chearfull concurrence, with his great Designs for our

Eter-

Eternal Advantage: and the most acceptable return that we can make, is a tender concern for our own Salvation.

A sincere Love to our Benefactour, will incline us to be kind and faithfull to our Soul, which is so high in his esteem; and to value that *Goodly Pearl*, which was so precious in his sight, that he descended from the Mansions of Bliss to purchase it.

Our Sins are so pernicious to us, that the Son of God is griev'd at beholding them; and they are so Injurious to his Honour, that we must renounce them with the keenest resentment.

And when we have deliver'd up our Enemies, to oblige our best Friend, and have endeavour'd to render our Life an Acceptable Service; we shall be qualified for that other Duty, which I shall chiefly insist on, The promoting the Salvation of our Brethren.

We cannot have this Design at Heart, till we have entirely espous'd that Interest, which is nearer to us. And indeed we should not pretend, that the Love of Christ has any Influence over us, till it prevails with us, to be Charitable to our selves; and our Gratitude to him, shews it self in the discharge of those Duties, which are more immediately in our Power. But if we live up to the engagements which are laid upon us, it is probable that we shall be successfull in our Applications to others: our Life will convince them that we are in earnest, and deserve to be believ'd: and

Pl. 72. 6.

and our persuasions will take a sure hold of their Affections, when they perceive that our Regard to them, is interwoven with the Principles of Self-Love, and we proceed upon the same grounds in promoting their Salvation, and *working out* our own. Our words will drop upon them, *like the rain into a fleece of wool*, when we are fill'd with a just sense of Religion, and have such a foretast of the Happiness of Heaven, as animates our imperfect Description of it, and almost *makes* our Discourse *the evidence of things not seen*.

That we may perform this glorious work aright, we must acquaint them with the Importance of that Affair, which is now depending, the many pressing Reasons that require their speedy Improvement of *this Accepted Time*, and the fatal Consequences of delay.

We must speak to them in the Name of *Jesus*, with those Arguments, which every Circumstance of his Life, which all the Tortures of his Death recommended to them.

We must Treat them with his Candour and Meekness, and as it becometh those, who are liable to the same Transgressions, and were under *the same Condemnation*.

We must pull off the scales from their Eyes with a gentle hand, shew them their Errors, bear with their Ignorance, gradually wean them from their Prejudices, and untwist the cords which are cast about them.

We must wait for a favourable opportunity, when they will be best dispos'd to hear the

the T
winnin

Our
the T
have t
strike
them
most c

And
rejoyce
name
But w
an ung
a faith
we di
them
drop i

Wh
not m
per;
of his
Wrath

Kn
swade
fore
confic
the H

Th
lemn
Churc
and t
and P
Sword

the Truth; and set it before them in the most winning, inviting manner.

Our Watchfullness should be as constant as the Tempter's, and our Love to them should have the sagacity of his Malice; that we may strike in with a seasonable juncture, and touch them to the Quick, when their Minds are most easy to be wrought upon.

And if this be term'd Priest-craft, let us *rejoyce that we are accounted worthy* to bear this name of Reproach, *As Deceivers, and yet True.* 2 Cor. 6. 8. But we must also *be Instant out of Season,* Bring 2 Tim. 4. 22 an ungratefull Truth near to them, and draw a faithfull representation of their Case, though we displease them by it; rather than leave them in a dangerous Security, and let them drop into Destruction.

When the Bowells of Christ's Mercy cannot move their perverse, disingenuous Temper; we must alarm them with the Treasures of his Vengeance, and *the consuming fire* of his Wrath.

Knowing the Terrors of the Lord, we must *persuade* 2 Cor. 5. 11. them to stand in Awe of his Justice, before it is too late to cry for Mercy; and to consider how *fearfull a thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God.* Heb. 10. 31.

This is agreeable to the intent of that solemn Exhortation, which the Wisdom of our Church has appointed for this holy Season, and those awakening words, which *are Quick* Heb. 4. 12. *and Powerfull, and sharper than any two-edged Sword.*

This

The Effectual Influence

This is that important Duty, which the *Love of Christ* will *constrain us* to perform with respect to others. And since it is hard to strive with the Corruptions of Human Nature: we should consider,

Secondly, The Arguments by which it will constrain us; which are,

1st, That it is the best way of expressing our Gratitude to our Redeemer, and of Remembring his Death, to act in pursuance of the end for which he died.

2dly, The Sorrows that sate heavily upon Him, when the Malignity of Sin, and his Father's displeasure against Sinners, were display'd before Him.

3dly, The Value of an Immortal Soul, and the Evils it is liable to suffer, except it embraces the Terms of Salvation. And,

Lastly, The Glory and Happiness of restoring our Brethren, to a capacity of being as Happy, as their Saviour design'd to make them.

And *1st*, That it is the best way of expressing our Gratitude to our Redeemer, and of remembring his Death, to act in pursuance of the end for which he died. The Blessed Angels delight to be employ'd in this *Labour of Love*, and were contented to be absent from the presence of the Fountain of Joy, while They *proclaim'd Peace on Earth*, and his

Luke 2. 14.

good Will toward Men. And They daily *Minister*

nister
over e
Ghof
scend
gainst

An
Merc
all th
our A
God
Inesti
doing

It v
that
nothin
his C
Him,
to his
He
chas'd
and fu
comm
own
vation

An
stors
anoth
me:
when
take o
of his
Th
Frien
Ser

nister to the Heirs of Salvation, and rejoyce Heb. 1. 14.
 over every Sinner that Repenteth. And the Holy Luk. 15. 10.
 Ghost secunds our dying Saviour, and conde-
 scends to be our Companion and Guard, a-
 gainst the Insinuations of our Adversaries.

And certainly we that stand in need of the
 Mercies of Jesus, and owe our wellfare, and
 all that we hope for, to his Love, must direct
 our Actions to that end, which the Son of
 God propos'd to himself, and think it an
 Inestimable Privilege, that we are capable of
 doing it.

It was a matter of the greatest Moment,
 that brought him down from Heaven; and
 nothing can please him better, than to see
 his Creatures aspiring to a Resemblance of
 Him, and contributing their weak endeavours
 to his Beloved Work.

He has taken the Souls which he has pur-
 chas'd, into the nearest relation to Himself;
 and such is his Affection to them, that he re-
 commends them to us, as earnestly, as if his
 own Happiness depended upon their Sal-
 vation.

And the Tenour of his Charge to the Pa-
 stors of his Flock, implies what he said on
 another occasion, *This do in Remembrance of*
me: and we commemorate him effectually,
 when we call a multitude of Sinners to par-
 take of his Benefits, and *shed abroad* the Riches
 of his Goodness.

This was the Request of our departing
 Friend; and when his grief would no longer
 Suffer

The Effectual Influence

suffer him to speak, he repeated it *with those Groanings which could not be utter'd*, and with the voice of his Blood.

We cannot but be affected with the History of that compassionate regard, which *Jesus* shew'd to his Mother, in the midst of his Passion; *when he saw her, and the Disciple standing by, whom he lov'd*; and cast his Eyes towards her, when *a sword pierc'd through her Soul*; he *said unto his Mother, Woman, Behold thy Son, and to the Disciple, Behold thy Mother*. And he is equally concern'd for all his Members, and commits them to the care of Guardians, in words equally expressive of his Affection.

John 19. 26.

Luke 2. 35.

Joh. 19. 27.

Can we imagin, that if we had stood by the Cross with *St John*, we could ever have forgotten a Command that we receiv'd from thence? How then can we neglect a Duty, which our Redeemer enjoyn'd us, which he intreated us to perform, with his Arms stretch'd out, and bleeding for us?

He chose to imprint it on *St Peter's* Heart, when it was melted with the Tears of Repentance; when he was sadly sensible of the Guilt of his Denial, and impatient till he had blotted out this remarkable proof of Human frailty.

That it might sink the deeper, he put him in mind of his Fault, by seeming Thrice to question the sincerity of his Love. And when he appeal'd to him, with, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*, he Thrice requir'd this Testimony of it, *Feed my Sheep*.

Joh. 21. 15,
16, 17.

Our

of the Love of Christ.

51

Our Saviour was pleas'd to mention works of Charity, as the principal marks of distinction, for which the Righteous will be rewarded, in the Day of Judgment; and he puts such a kind Interpretation, even upon a seasonable Relief of our poor Brethren, under their Bodily Necessities, as to say, *Inas-* Mat. 25. 40.
much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.

How graciously then will he accept that Charity which is of a Nobler Nature! with how kind a welcome, will he receive those that have reliev'd the Souls of Men; that *gave* them *the Bread that came down from Heaven*, when they were *Hungry*; and the Waters of Life, when they were *Thirsty*; that *Took them In* when they were *Strangers* and *Aliens* from God; and perswaded them to be Reconcil'd to him; that *cloth'd* them with Righteousness, when they were *Naked*; that *visited* them, when they had no Strength to do any thing that was Good, when *their whole Head was sick, and their whole Heart faint*; and went to them, when they were *in Prison*, fast bound in the Chains of their Sins.

A second Argument for the performance of this work of Charity, is drawn from the Sorrows that fate heavily upon our Saviour, when the malignity of Sin, and his Father's displeasure against Sinners, were display'd before him. *The Yoke of our Transgressions was bound upon him, and it almost made his Strength to fall, because the Comforter that should relieve*

The Effectual Influence

his Soul was far from him. When he saw how much the Enemy had prevail'd, he wept, his Eyes ran down with Water.

He cloth'd himself with our Nature, that he might be *Touch'd with the feeling of our Affliction*: and though he was himself *without Sin*, yet he mourn'd for our Iniquity, as if he alone was guilty of it: and can we be insensible of our Brother's Calamity, which is so lively an Image of our Own?

Did the Son of God come down from that
 Rev. 21. 4. Blessed Place, where *there is no Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain*, that he might be *acquainted with Grief*, and every Evil that is incident to Mankind, that we might be no more obnoxious to them? And shall not the Sins of those wretched Creatures that refuse the Benefits of this Salvation, *bring Streams out of the Rocks of our Hearts, and cause Waters to run down like Rivers?*

Behold *Jesus* in the Garden oppress'd with the weight of our Iniquities, and *exceeding Sorrowfull even unto Death!* The Anguish of his Soul, was so sharp and exquisite, that his Father thought fit to send *an Angel from Heaven to strengthen him*; and the Agonies of his Body forc'd out, as it were, Tears of *Blood falling to the Ground*. And behold Him upon the Cross, depriv'd of *the Light of his Father's Countenance*, who hid his Face from him, to manifest his Displeasure against our Sins! A
 Mat. 27. thick *Darkness* cover'd Him, as it did *the Land from the sixth, to the ninth Hour*: and then he

ex-

express'd the consummation of Misery, with
my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

This must constrain us to contend with the
Sins of Men, which are so odious in the sight
of God; which kindled his Anger towards
his Only-begotten Son; and which will banish
the guilty Soul from his Presence for ever.

O Dreadfull Punishment, which implies the
loss of all the Happiness that we can desire,
and suffering all the Evils that we have rea-
son to fear!

And this puts us in mind of a Third Argu-
ment, by which *the Love of Christ will con-
strain us*, which is the value of an Immortal
Soul, and the Evils it is liable to suffer, ex-
cept it embraces the Terms of Salvation.

The Excellence of this better part of our
Being, aggravates the loss of the Privileges,
it was design'd to enjoy, and enhances the
Evils, it is, for its stupid neglect, condemn'd
to suffer.

And the Blessed Jesus, who is thoroughly ac-
quainted with the Faculties of our Nature,
has done enough to convince us of the worth
of a Soul, by giving his Life to save it: and
made a lively representation of the Punish-
ment of Sin, by undergoing such a train of
Miseries, to rescue the Sinner.

But we need not look any farther than our
daily Observation, for a proof of the value
of an Immortal Soul. Its Thoughts and Re-
flections assure us, that it was form'd for the
enjoyment of the greatest Good, and is also

The Effectual Influence

capable of suffering the worst of Evils. Even in this imperfect State, it reaches back to past Ages, and by rendring their Occurrences, and the Actions of many Generations, present to it self, it lives over, *The old Time that was before it.* And not contented with a bounded Prospect, it frames a notion of endless Existence; and travels through Ten thousand times Ten thousand Years, and carries on its Eye to an ever-increasing Number.

Dissatisfied with every thing, that this World affords, it confesses that God alone can fill its Capacities with Enjoyment. Though it is sometimes so foolishly mistaken, as to pursue after other Objects, yet at the same time, it acknowledges, that he only can answer its large desires: for inferiour Pleasures do but torment it with Disappointment; and this restless Being, quits one Shadow for another, *and never continues in one stay,* till it has found out the Author of perfect Contentment: other Objects only provoke its hunger; and the draughts of sensual Pleasure, inflame its Thirst.

But when it has chosen Religion for its delight, the Heart expands it self, that it may receive the Tide of Pleasure that is flowing into it; its Faculties grow wider, to qualify themselves for more and more Happiness; and its little World opens to let in Heaven upon it.

How then can we think, without Trembling at the Thought; that this Everlasting Being,

to

to which God himself *had such respect*, and which *he so regarded*, as to be born and to die for it; which is capable of the highest Happiness, and must be for ever Miserable without it; which will be always panting after God; and if it is shut out from his Presence, will be punish'd with Insatiable want; That this Intelligent Spirit, should so pervert the Gifts of God, as to turn them into the Instruments of Torture; that instead of reviewing its Life in a state of Blessedness, and reflecting upon it with unspeakable Joy; it should prey upon it self; be *scourg'd with Scorpions*; and be ever dying in the *unquenchable fire* of Remorse; That it should be compell'd to set the horrid Circumstances of its Guilt in array, before it; to call back the ill-spent moments of Time, to add to its misery; and to anticipate the Ages of a dreadful Eternity; and have its Torments always present, and yet still to come!

How can we suffer a Soul thus to perish, which was invited into the Heavenly Society, to sit down at *the Supper of the Lamb*, which is *without Blemish*, and to converse with Angels that never fell by Transgression?

If we bear any love to Christ; if we have any tenderness of Nature; if we have any sense of Misery; we shall intreat our Fellow-Christians, to consider, what will become of them, *if they neglect so great Salvation.*

Heb. 2. 3.

We should provoke our selves to a hearty concern for their Interest, by the Example of

Exod. 32.
32.

of *Moses*, who so espous'd the Cause of his People, as to offer himself, to screen them from the Vengeance of the Almighty. *If thou wilt not forgive their Sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy Book which thou hast written.*

Rom. 9. 1,
2, 3.

And we may behold an equal Instance of zeal in *St Paul*, bewailing the obstinacy of the *Jews*; with, *I say the Truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my Heart; for I could wish that my self were Accursed from Christ, for my Brethren, my Kinsmen, according to the Flesh.*

This must proceed from him, in whom dwells the fullness of Love. These exalted Saints, were even ready to quit their own Happiness, for the Advantage of others. Whereas All that is expected from us, is to act with regard to Both, that *we may save our own Souls, and Those that hear us.*

And there is, Lastly, another Argument to constrain us, which is the Glory and Happiness of restoring our Brethren, to a capacity of being as Happy, as their Saviour design'd to make them. And this is more than we can yet fully conceive.

He only that extended his wonderfull Kindness to Men, and look'd upon them with the utmost *Length, and Breadth, and Height, and Depth* of Love, can take the measure of that perfect Bliss, *which he has prepar'd for those that love him.*

He.

He manifested his Power, when *he laid the foundations of the World, when he measur'd the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meeted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the Earth, in a Measure, and weigh'd the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance.* He shew'd his Goodness in raising this Beautifull Fabrick, for the use of Man, and commanding an Innumerable multitude of Creatures, to minister to his Benefit, to his Pleasure, and to his Admiration. Isai. 40. 12.

But he appear'd yet greater upon the Cross, when he renew'd the weaken'd Faculties of deprav'd Nature, deliver'd Sinners and Enemies from Infinite wrath, and reach'd out to them the delightfull promises of Eternal Life.

And such is his Condescension, that he permits us to be Instrumental, in procuring the happiness of our Fellow-creatures, and to act under Him in This Blessed work. He has offer'd some parts of it, to our Imitation, and employ'd us, to tender to them, the means of Salvation. And our Heart cannot but *break forth into Joy*, and long to lay hold on an opportunity, so beneficial to them, so glorious for us.

To bestow an Alms upon a Miserable Object, gives us such an abundance of Satisfaction, as excells all the pleasures of the Epicure. To observe the Joy that sparkles in his face, when he receives a comfortable Refreshment, is a sublime and exquisite Pleasure; and no Worldly Happiness can equal the thought,
of

of making another Happy. And if the reward of a Transient act of Charity, is so full of Gladness; how must it transport us, to remember, that we have sav'd a Soul! To subdue Kingdoms, and enjoy the pomp of a Triumph, is not comparable to this Godlike Act. Nothing but the prospect of Heaven, can raise us to such a height of Bliss, as proceeds from the reflection, that we have turn'd a *Sinner from the error of his way*, and that, under God, he owes an *incorruptible Crown*, and never-fading Glories, to our timely Admonition, our kind Reproof.

Ep. to Phil.

How does St *Paul* rejoyce in *Onesimus*, whom he had begotten to Life, while in Bonds for the Gospel! With what Affectionate intreaties does he beseech *Philemon*, to receive him that was his own Bowels!

Acts 20. 23,
24.

That this great Apostle might be a Benefactor in every place, he went into distant Regions, and labour'd to communicate the Goodness of God, to all parts of the World. Tho' the Holy Ghost (says he) witnesses in every City, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me; yet none of these things move me; neither count I my Life dear to my self, so that I might finish my course with Joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

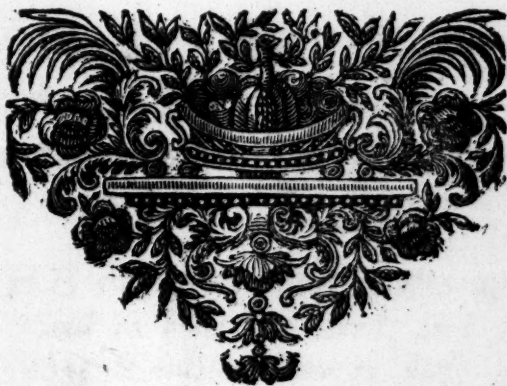
Acts 20. 25,
27.

And Happy, unspeakably happy, will be our case, if we follow the example of this faithfull Pastour, and can take the Church of Christ to record, that we are Pure from the Bloud of

of all Men, and have not shunn'd to declare unto them all the Counsel of God. The Remembrance of having done this Duty, will bring all those, whom we turn to Righteousness, to comfort us at the hour of Death, and make our Bed easy in our sickness.

And when the Trumpet has call'd to Judgment, when the Veil of this World is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, when the Earth quakes, and the Rocks are rent, and the Graves are open'd, many of those Saints that slept in the Dust, shall witness for us, before the Judgment Seat: Their Righteousness shall proclaim our praise, and their Joyfull Sentence shall be an earnest of ours; and we shall be cloth'd with Immortal Glory, and shine as the Stars for ever and ever. Dan. 12. 3.

Now to him that Lov'd us, and wash'd us from our Sins in his own Blood, be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever.



The

S

P

St.

Who

str

L

cic

T

of his

Serr

*The Mercy of God in Preserv-
ing us.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the

PARISH-CHURCH

OF

St. PETER's in the East,
O X F O R D.

Pfalm CIII⁴.

*Who redeemeth thy Life from De-
struction, and crowneth thee with
Loving kindness and tender Mer-
cies.*

THE devout Psalmist calls upon *his*
Soul to bless the Lord, and upon all Pf. 103. 2.
that is within him to bless his holy
Name. He surveys the multitude
of his Obligations to God, with pious Won-
der,
Serm. IV.

The Mercy of God

der, and Admiration, and endeavours to recollect the mighty sum of Benefits that were bestowed upon him.

- He is indeed convinc'd that it is impossible for Man to form a perfect Judgment of the Loving kindness of God, unless *he could measure the Waters in the hollow of his hand, and mete out Heaven with the span, and comprehend the Dust of the Earth in a measure, and weigh the Mountains in scales, and the Hills in a ballance.*
11. 40. 12. *For as the Heaven is high above the Earth, so great is his Mercy towards them that fear him; and it is boundless and unconfin'd, as eternity it self, for it is from everlasting to everlasting.*
- Ps. 103. 11. *But yet he recounts some of the most remarkable Instances of the kindness of God, who forgiveth all our Iniquities, who healeth all our Diseases; who redeemeth our Life from destruction, who crowneth us with Loving kindness and Tender mercies.*
- v. 17.

But yet he recounts some of the most remarkable Instances of the kindness of God, who forgiveth all our Iniquities, who healeth all our Diseases; who redeemeth our Life from destruction, who crowneth us with Loving kindness and Tender mercies.

In these words are contain'd both Spiritual and Temporal Benefits; and in their highest sense they relate to the wonderfull work of our Redemption; but if we consider them only with respect to the Blessings of this present Life, we shall find sufficient Reason to be thankfull to God; and if we are truly gratefull for these lesser Mercies, we shall certainly qualify our selves for the greater. Let us therefore consider,

First, That the Authour and Giver of Life daily preserves it to us, by redeeming us from Destruction.

Fr
daily
Dest
Crea
thou
mist
fearf
Bu
tions
of th
by w
were
and
ing o
us th

An
fectio
not h
hold
that
of ou
scree
furro
from
voke
Ea
other
great

St.

Secondly, That he continually heightens and enlarges the Blessing of Life, by *crowning us with loving Kindness and tender Mercies.* And

First, That the Authour and Giver of Life daily preserves it to us by redeeming us from Destruction. It is delightfull to think of our Creation; and this is enough to fill our thoughts, and transport us, as it did the Psalmist, when he said, *I will praise thee, for I am* Pl. 139. 14. *fearfully and wonderfully made.*

But least we should forget our first Obligations to God, he renews the Remembrance of them, by Blessings of a later Date; and by wonderfully preserving us, he does as it were, continually create us. And his Power and Goodness are no less manifest in supporting our Life; than they were in *breathing into us the breath of it.*

And they cannot but engage all our Affections, if we consider, first, that we could not *live, move or have our being*, if he did not AGs 17. 28. hold us up by his Almighty Arm; secondly, that he not only maintains the feeble powers of our Nature, in their ordinary Course, but screens us from the multitude of Evils, that surround us; and thirdly, that he redeems us from Destruction, though our Sins daily provoke him to destroy us.

Each of those Obligations rises above the other; and their single force is inexpressibly great, how then must they affect us, when they

The Mercy of God

they are all united! Our bare Subsistence lays an immense Debt upon us, and for this alone we should for ever adore the hand that sustains us. But it is also stretch'd out to save us from the Calamities that compass us, round about; and not only upholds us in Life, but

Psal. 4. 8. *maketh us to dwell in safety.*

Yet our compassionate Friend does not think even this sufficient. He guards us against the Evils that would fall upon us, if he would permit them; and he also forbears to inflict the Evils that we have deserved. Vain Man is too apt to imagine that he is self sufficient, but if he would consult his daily Experience, he might find undeniable Tokens of his Weakness. The other parts of the Creation entirely depend upon God. The multitudes of Brutes that move upon the face of the World, all wait upon him. When he hides his Face, they are troubled, when he taketh away their breath, they die, and return to their Dust.

Psal. 104. 27, 29.

It is through him that the foundations of the

Job 37. 6. *Hills stand fast; for he hangeth the Earth upon*
 Job 26. 7. *nothing, and he laid the Corner Stone thereof.*
 v. 11. *And if he is angry the Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his Reproof.* Why then should Man presume so much upon his own

Job 7. 5, 6, 7. *strength? Man whose flesh is cloth'd with Worms, and clods of Dust, whose Days are swifter than a Weavers Shuttle, whose Life is Wind.*

The Children of Men dwell in houses of Clay, their foundation is in the Dust, and they are crush'd before the Moth: and the Almighty need not exert

exe
wit
Ma
ture
and
had
Voic
C
we
lute
He
down
the
dant
he is
and
T
he qu
him a
when
Hoar
as wi
when
cleave
O
we c
vance
we ar
to stu
and c
must
no ot
this p
Ser

exert his Power against us; if he does but withdraw his Favour, *we are gone.* And yet Psal. 90. 10. Man, that feeble, impotent, dependent Creature, vaunts himself against the Lord his Maker, and *casts abroad the Rage of his Wrath,* as if he Job 40. 9, *had an Arm like God, and could thunder with a* 11. *Voice like him.*

Our Food and Raiment are Blessings that we daily receive from God, Blessings absolutely necessary for the Preservation of Life. *He maketh small the drops of Water; they pour* Job 36. 27, *down Rain according to the Vapour thereof: which* 28. *the Clouds do drop, and distill upon Man abundantly, and so he provideth for the Earth.* But if Pf. 65. 10. he is displeas'd, *he makes our Heaven as Iron,* Deut. 28. *and our Earth as Brass.* 23.

Through him *our garments are warm, when* Job 37. 17. *he quieteth the Earth by the South wind; and by him also we are cover'd from the piercing Cold, when he giveth Snow like Wool, and scattereth the* Pl. 147. 16. *Hoar frost like Asbes; when the Waters are hid* Job 38. 30, *as with a Stone, and the face of the deep is frozen;* 38. *when the dust groweth into hardness, and the floods cleave fast together.*

Our Frame is so tender and delicate, that we cannot but admire the Art and Contrivance, with which we are made, and by which we are continued in Being. And were Man to study and meditate upon his own Fabrick, and consider, how curiously it is wrought, he must be astonish'd at himself. And were there no other proof of a God and a Providence, this pleasing view would constrain him to ac-

The Mercy of God

knowledge both. And had God vouchsaf'd us no other Revelation of Himself, this would in some measure display the Divine Attributes before us.

If we brought no Diseases upon our selves; offer'd no violence to Nature by improper Mixtures, or undue Quantities of Food; it would still be strange, that it should hold out so long, and not wear out it self.

If we observe the Channels through which our Blood is conveyed, *that River of God*, which waters and refreshes us in every Part, we shall naturally conclude that the constantly flowing Stream must injure the Vessels thro' which it passes, and render them thinner and weaker every Day, till at length they give too large a vent to our animal Spirits, and let out our Life, which is too ready to take *to it self Wings and fly away.*

And every Day shews us an Emblem of our case. For the Pipes and Conduits by which the several Families of populous Cities are supplied with Water, though of a strong and solid substance, are either gradually consum'd by the Stream, as it passes; or suddenly burst, as it flows in too fast upon them; and they require continual Repairs, to make them answer their end. And how frail, and sleight are our Veins, and strongest Arteries, in comparison of these!

And farther, our Blood may be soon polluted, with the corrupt Humours which enter in at every pore; and are perpetually gather-

ed

ed f
Foo
man
to,
Hea
C
whic
are
snap
of T
depe
they
of Ir
O
of L
Hum
their
is en
not
and
bein
and
the
press
yeild
Crea
Levi
shut
near
them.
gethe
of his
themj

ed from the Air, we breath in, and our daily Food. And yet it performs its circuit for many Years, and is not stopp'd in its Passage to, or return from the Fountain of Life, our Heart.

Our Nerves and Sinews are *the bands by which we are held together*, yet many of them are spun so fine, that they might as easily be snapp'd asunder, as a single Hair, or a *Thread* Judges 16. *of Towe when it toucheth the Fire.* But yet we ^{9.} depend as much upon their strength, as if they were *strong pieces of Brass, and like bars* Job 40. 18. *of Iron.*

Our Lungs, those necessary Instruments of Life, need not contract any sharp fretting Humours, to corrode them, and prey upon their feeble Substance. Their perpetual use is enough to wear them away; and they cannot perform their appointed Task, and open and shut themselves every moment, without being impaired. The sharpness of the Air, and the changes of the Seasons, injure even the pillars of Marble, and make an Impression upon the stony Rocks. But our soft yeilding Flesh, is preserv'd by our Almighty Creatour, as if he had made us *like the great Leviathan, whose Scales are his Pride, which are* Job 41. 15, *shut up together as with a close Seal.* *One is so* 16, 17, 23. *near to another, that no Air can come between* 24. *them. They are joynd one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered. The Flakes of his Flesh are joyned together. They are firm in themselves, they cannot be moved. His Heart is*

The Mercy of God

*as firm as a Stone, yea as hard as a piece of a
neither Millstone.*

Pf. 102. 3.

Unless our Bodies are kept in a regular Temper, and our vital Heat is maintain'd without any excess or defect, our Life is expos'd to the greatest Danger; for if it is rais'd into a violent Flame, *our Days are consumed away like Smoak, and our Bones are burnt up, as it were a Fire-brand.* And if its Warmth abates too much, our Limbs become dead, and languid, and our Senses lose their quickness and force. And yet how irregular are we! how often are we wrought up into an unnatural Ferment! and how soon do we fall into the other extreme, and chill and strike a Damp upon our selves!

We also run innumerable Hazards, by the things that we take for our Nourishment; we embrace them without distinction, and frequently injure our Nature, by laying an offensive Burthen upon it. And it is very uncertain whether it will be able to relieve it self by a proper discharge; whether it will observe an exact proportion, without casting off too little, or too much. If the latter is the case, we are wasted and pine away; if the former, we are overcome by an unweildy weight, and pressed down into the Earth.

Thus, if we could look into our selves, we should be strook with horror at the sight of the many secret Passages, by which Diseases might slide in upon us, and the innumerable multitude of *Doors by which the King of Terrors might come in.* And

see
refl
ove
he
the
his
Flou
wer
Lor
up q
But
when
at on
A
Dest
us t
signa
us;
that
Be
die b
Swon
devo
Billon
Insta
fnatc
befor
ness,
Stren
giving
or bl
Grave

And if we look round about us, we shall see Dangers on every side; and did not God restrain them, they would spread themselves over us, *like a wide breaking in of Waters*. But Job. 30. 14. he commands them to stand still, as he check'd the mighty waves of old, when *by the blast of* Exod. 15. 1 *his Nostrils, the Waters were gather'd together, the* 8. *Flouds stood upright, as an heap, and the Depths were congeal'd in the heart of the Sea.* Pf. 124. 1, *If the* 2, 3, 4. *Lord were not on our side, they would swallow us up quick, and the Stream would goe over our Souls.* But he preserves us in the midst of Dangers, *when a thousand fall beside us, and ten thousand* Pf. 91. 7. *at our right hand.*

And the dreadful Calamities and suddain Destructions of others, continually admonish us to acknowledge the special Favours, and signal Mercies which God has vouchsaf'd to us; for it is entirely owing to his Goodness, that we are less miserable than they.

Besides the vast Numbers of Men, which die by ordinary Diseases, or are cut off by the Sword, or swept away by the Pestilence, or devour'd by Famine, or *compass'd about by the* Jonah 2. 3. *Billows and Waves of the Sea*, there are many Instances daily before us, of Persons that are snatch'd from us by unexpected Accidents, before they have been acquainted with Sick-ness, or Pain, or perceiv'd the least decay of Strength; their Danger seizes them without giving the least Notice of it self, and a fall or blow sends them down quick into the Grave.

The Mercy of God

And many of those that have been hurt, without being entirely destroy'd, and survive these shocking Injuries, live only to be miserable, and become the most dismal Spectacles of Mortality. They drag about an useless Body, and are a burthen to themselves, and a terrour to others.

How often are the finest Parts sullied in an Instant, and the brightest Reason cover'd with the grossest Darknes! How often are the most artfull Policies, and the closest trains of Thought puzzled, and confounded! and how soon are they changed into wild, incoherent Dreams, and stupid Dotage!

And the strongest, the happiest, the safest amongst us, are equally liable to these surprizing Evils. But *God stretches out his Wings to be our Covering, and the shadow of the Almighty defends us.*

Ps. 89. 23. When he appears in our behalf, *no Enemy can do us Violence, no Evils can come nigh to hurt us.* But *when he sends them forth, they go and say unto him here we are.* And therefore his Goodness is yet more wonderfull, because he Redeems us from Destruction, though our Sins daily provoke him to destroy us.

Job 38. 35.

Our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this Life, would be infinitely above our Deserts, if we could deserve any thing that is Good at the hands of God. But the Life that he gave us, is forfeited every moment; yet he forbears to bereave us of it. It stands so much in need of his support, that

it

it cannot be maintain'd without fresh Instances of his Kindness; and yet he sheds them upon us, though we have call'd for his fiery Indignation.

We are naturally liable to be destroyed by a thousand Evils; and our Sins expose us to a thousand more; yet our Gracious God is unwilling to *deal with us after our Sins, or reward us after our Iniquities.* If he should *put us* Psal. 38. 1, *to rebuke in his Anger, and chasten us in his heavy* 2, 3. *Displeasure; his Arrows would stick fast in us, and his Hand would press us sore; there would be no health in our Flesh, because of his Displeasure, neither any rest in our Bones, by reason of our Sin.*

When he with Rebukes does chasten man for Sin, Pl. 39. 11, *he makes his beauty to consume away, like as it* 15. *were a moth fretting a Garment. But he spares us yet a little while,* that we may endeavour to regain his Favour; and keeps back his hand from destroying us in this World, that we may escape eternal Destruction in the other.

He might have overtaken us with Judgment, while we were laden with Iniquity, and summon'd us to appear before him, when *our Sins would have testified* II. 59. 12. *against us, and the greatness of our Guilt, would have filled us with everlasting Confusion.*

But he chooses rather to give us a larger Portion of time, a Blessing of the highest value; which we shall acknowledge by every expression of Gratitude, if we consider either the Miseries that we must have endured, if
God

The Mercy of God

Jer. 15. 6.

Nahum 1.
3, 6.

God had not waited for our Amendment, or the Happiness that we shall certainly enjoy, if we use this precious time aright. But if we abuse even this also, God will be *weary with Repenting*, and he will stretch out his hand against us to destroy us. *For the Lord who is slow to Anger, is also great in Power, and will not at all acquit the Wicked. Who can stand before his Indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his Anger? His Fury is pour'd out like Fire, and the Rocks are thrown down by him.* But that the kinder Influences of his Goodness, may work upon us, we should consider,

Secondly, That he continually heightens and enlarges the Blessings of Life, by *crowning us with Loving kindness and Tender mercies.*

Is it not enough, O Gracious God, that thou supportest our frail, uncertain Life; that thou art *our Shield and Buckler* against the host of Evils that are ready to assault us; and that thou also interposest to save us from the pernicious Evils, which our Sins have deserved? Is it not enough, unless thou heapest thy Benefits upon us, thy unworthy Creatures; and *crownest us with Loving kindness and Tender mercies?*

All things that we enjoy are derived from God, and even the Enjoyment of them: without him, neither the Riches, nor the Honours, nor the Pleasures of Life can satisfy us. Without his Favour we cannot be Happy in

in the
extre

And
duall
rable
ry he
and i
must
giver

No
than
that
he ha
made
of wa
Frien
surpr
broug
seem
Frien
heart

An
belov
the Ga
them
to us
ours.
to be
violence
us, th
our Ey
jects
But C

in the midst of them; nay we cannot but be extremely Miserable.

And if Life it self is a Blessing, it must gradually rise and increase, as it is rendred tolerable, comfortable and delightfull to us. Every hour brings a new Debt along with it; and if we value any thing that we possess, we must gratefully look up to the Authour and giver of it.

Nothing can be more agreeable to us, than to reflect upon the train of Blessings that he has shed upon us; and consider how he has multiplied his Kindnesses, as we have made our Progress in Life; and what variety of ways he has taken, to shew himself our Friend and Benefactor. How often has he surprized us with Good! How often has he brought Good out of Evil! when we have seem'd destitute and helpless, he has rais'd up Friends whom we knew not, and inclin'd the hearts of Strangers to be favourable to us.

And when our nearest Relations, or most beloved Acquaintance have been brought to *the Gates of Death*, he has wonderfully renew'd them to health; and been equally mercifull to us, in saving their Life, and preserving ours. All our hopes in this World seem'd to be expos'd, and likely to be blasted by the violence of a Disease: and our fears have told us, that within a few Moments *the Desire of our Eyes* would be taken from us, and the Objects of our Love would turn to Corruption. But God in his *Tender mercies* prevented all that

The Mercy of God

that we fear'd, and vouchsafed us more than we could hope for; and our Friends have been restor'd to us to double our Joys, and bear a part of our Sorrows.

When we think of these things, surely our hearts must glow with pleasure, and impatiently long to express our Gratitude; and whensoever we take any Delight in our Friends, those greatest Blessings of Life, we must praise and adore Almighty God, our chief Friend, who gave and continues them to us.

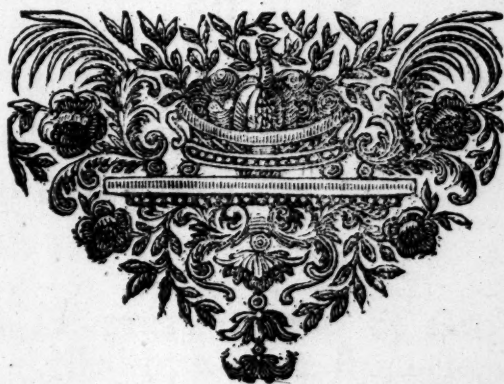
To him we owe the Success of all our Cares and Labours; and it is he that crowns our Endeavours, and brings them to the desir'd end. And if the affectionate wishes, and earnest expectations of our Parents have been agreeably answer'd, and they have liv'd to see us prosper and flourish; this is to be ascrib'd to the indulgent Care and kind Providence of our Heavenly Father, who has been pleased to become a Fellow-labourer with them, and to espouse our Cause, as much as if his Happiness depended upon our Welfare.

Thus if we remember the Days that are past, the multitude of his Benefits will appear in a beautifull order before us; and if we look forward to those that are to come, and place our Confidence in God, we shall find that his Mercies towards us, still encrease and multiply. *For a Woman may forget her sucking Child, and not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb: but he will not forget us. For we are graven upon*
the

the Palms of his hands, and our Condition is continually before him.

Let us therefore mention the loving Kindnesses Isa. 63. 7.
of the Lord, and the Praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us.
And let us all call upon every Creature to assist us in paying the just tribute of Gratitude.
O praise the Lord, ye Angels of his, ye that excell in strength, ye that fulfill his Commandments, and hearken to the Voice of his Words. O praise the Lord all ye his Hosts, ye Servants of his that do his Pleasure. O speak good of the Lord, all ye Works of his, in all places of his Dominion. Pf. 103. 20, 21, 22.

And with Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of Heaven, and with every thing Pf. 150. 6.
that hath breath, praise thou the Lord, O my Soul.



the Father of his hand, and our Foundation is
 continually before him.
 Let us therefore mention the loving kindness
 of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, accord-
 ing to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us.
 And let us all call upon every Creature to as-
 sist us in paying the just tribute of gratitude.
 O praise the Lord, ye Angels of his host, ye
 all in strength, ye that stand in his commandment,
 and hearers to the praise of his Name. O praise
 the Lord all ye his hosts, ye servants of his that
 do his pleasure. O praise good of the Lord, all ye
 works of his, in all parts of his Dominion.
 And with Angels and Archangels, and all
 the Company of Heaven, and with every thing
 that hath breath, praise then the Lord, O my Soul.



The

S

On

This

the

Fe

So

T

his N

Ser

*The Goodness of God manifested in
our Redemption.*

A
SERMON

PREACH'D at

Magdalene-Coll.

IN

O X F O R D,

On CHRISTMAS Day, 1716.

1 Tim. I. 15.

*This is a faithfull saying, and wor-
thy of all acceptation, that Christ
Jesus came into the world to save
Sinners.*

THE great Apostle St Paul being
called by a Voice from Heaven, to
preach the Gospel of Christ; to be
a chosen Vessel unto him, and to bear Acts 9. 15.
his Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the
Serm. V. Children

1 Tim. 1.
12, 13.

v. 15, 16.

Children of Israel; acknowledges the abundant Goodness of God, in that he vouchsaf'd such large measures of Grace, so distinguishing a Mercy to him, and *counted him Faithfull, who was before a Blasphemer, and a Persecutor, and Injurious*. Having represented his own Case, and the surprizing Change, that was wrought in him, that was an avow'd Enemy to the Faith; he proceeds to shew that God's infinite Love extended to all Mankind; and the terms of Reconciliation, were reach'd out by his Son Jesus to a whole World of Sinners, as well as to him that was the *chief* of Them. *This is a faithfull saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief; Howbeit, for this cause I obtain'd Mercy, that in me first, Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a Pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* The words of Truth are usher'd in with a solemn Preface; as it is usual with St Paul, to engage our Attention, and make an Impression on our Minds, by a form of this or the like Nature, when he delivers any Doctrine or Precept of more than ordinary Importance. And thus we may suppose him speaking to Timothy; This is a Truth, that has the fullest Confirmation, that is recommended by the highest Authority, that concerns our true Interest, and is matter of Comfort, and Joy unspeakable; and therefore ought to be receiv'd by all the Powers of our Souls, with an entire Assent, with Approbation,

probation, with Gladness; namely, *that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners*. Though it surpasses and far exceeds the utmost that the Jew or Gentile could hope for, or conceive, that the Son of God should leave the Bosom of his Father, and condescend to be born for us, and our Salvation; yet it certainly is undeniable. *The multitude of the Heavenly Host* have proclaim'd the Birth of the ¹⁴*King of Kings*, and sang *Glory to God in the Highest, on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men*. And God hath ordain'd me also who *am not meet to* ^{1 Cor. 15. 9.} *be call'd an Apostle*, to publish the same glad Tidings, to declare unto you, that the Lord of Life is your Saviour, and the most High God your Redeemer. And if any thing can inflame your Heart with Devotion, and a sense of Gratitude; if any thing can fill you with Pleasure, this surely must do it; that God is become Man to pluck you out of the jaws of Death, to atone for you, by an All-sufficient Satisfaction, and blot out all your Offences.

The words being thus explain'd, I shall offer the following Particulars to your Consideration.

First, The Birth of Jesus Christ, or that he came into the World.

Secondly, The End for which he came, to save Sinners.

Thirdly, The Goodness of God to sinfull Men; And,

Fourthly,

The Goodness of God

Fourthly, The Returns that we ought to make, for this Instance of his Goodness. And

First, The Birth of Jesus Christ, or that he came into the World. *The brightness of God's Glory, the express Image of his Person, by whom he made the Worlds and upholds them in Being,* was pleas'd to unite himself to the work of his own hands; to put on our Nature with all its Infirmities, *Sin only excepted*, and to pitch his Tent among Men, and to dwell in that Flesh which he form'd out of the Dust. Tho' he was from all Eternity equal with the Father, had all Perfections in himself, and was the ever flowing Fountain of his own Happiness; yet *he emptied and debas'd himself into the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of Men.*

The Divine Wisdom had wonderfully contriv'd the Mystery of our Redemption, and laid and dispos'd a Train of Occurrences, in a beautifull order, to prepare the World for the Blessing that was design'd for it, for the Reception of the Messiah, the Desire of the Nations. Almost every part of the Jewish Law had a Respect unto him; its Ceremonies and positive Institutions, were Types and Shadows of him, and pointed to *the Sun of Righteousness*. Moses and all the Prophets foretold his Coming; and as the Day of Salvation drew near, when God would manifest himself by this Dispensation of Love, they were plain and

and
to le
Glor
The
pect
out o
his K
they
migh
of Sa
An
from
finful
Heav
Beho
thousa
less I
laid i
W
the Ea
tions
People
thou n
speak
An
Preser
spread
Houfe
Holine
Rever
appro
But
Jesus,
Sern

manifested in our Redemption. 81

and exprefs in their Predictions, were as *Stars* Mat. 2. *to lead unto Christ*, or as the Dawning of that Glorious Light that fhortly after fhone forth. The Heathen alfo were wrought into an Expectation, that there *fhould come forth a Rod* II. II. 1. 10. *out of the Stem of Jeffe, and a Branch grow out of his Roots, unto which the Gentiles fhould seek*. And they were allready going forth to meet their mighty Deliverer, that would *give knowledge* Luke 1. 77. *of Salvation unto the ends of the Earth.* AGs 13. 47.

And *in the fullnefs of time*, he defcended Gal. 4. 4. from the Mansions of Blifs, into a wretched finfull World; from the higheft Throne in Heaven, to the loweft degree of Humiliation. Behold! he before whom *thousands and ten thousands daily Minifter*, becomes a weak help-*lefs Infant, is wrapp'd in Swadling Cloaths, and* Luke 2. 12. *laid in a Manger.*

When the Lord appear'd on *Mount Sinai*, the Earth trembled and quak'd, the very founda- Pfal. 18. 7. *tions of the Hills fhook and were remov'd; The People stood afar off, and said unto Moses, fpeak* Ex. 20. 19. *thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God fpeak with us, leaft we die.*

And afterward when the Symbol of his Prefence, the facred Fire came down, and fpread it felf over, and *fill'd the Tabernacle*, the Ex. 40. 34. *House that he had chofen; even the Beauty of* 2 Chron. 20. 21. *Holinefs was terrible, and ftruck an Awe and Reverence, on thofe that were permitted to approach towards it.*

But when the Lover of Souls, the Blessed Jesus, made his abode amongft us, he pre-
Serm. V. F fented

sented himself to his Rebellious Creatures, as one of their Brethren, conceal'd his Majesty from them, and graciously cover'd his Divine Nature with a Veil; the multitude of Sinners would otherwise have been unable to bear his Presence, and their Hearts would have melted away, their Spirits sunk within them.

Had an Embassadour of the Heavenly Court been sent down to acquaint them, that God was willing to be Reconcil'd; while the Message of Peace, was as yet kept from them, they might justly have fear'd, that he was a *Destroying Angel*; and their Imaginations have suggested to them, that the Sword of Vengeance was stretch'd out, and *the Vials of God's Wrath* to be pour'd on them. Their Guilt might write bitter things against them; and they could hardly think it possible, that a Just and Holy God should forgive and pass by their Offences.

1 Chron. 21. 12.
Rev. 16. 1.
Pl. 144. 5.

And when God himself *bowed the Heavens and came down*, they might form a dreadful Idea of his important Design; that after he had besought them to turn unto him, and in vain intreated them, by his Servants the Prophets, he would at last openly shew his Power, and execute Judgment on them. But their offended God display'd his Mercy, and the treasures of his Goodness, all the Bowels and Tendernefs of a Man, joyn'd with the infinite Compassion of a God.

The guilty World may not be unfitly represented by the Eleven Patriarchs, when *Ju-*

dah

manifested in our Redemption.

83

dab in the Name of the Rest, said unto the Lord of *Egypt*, *What shall we say unto my Lord?* Gen. 44. 16.
what shall we speak? or how shall we clear our selves? God hath found out the Iniquity of thy Servants.

And if God may be compar'd with Dust and Ashes, and the most perfect Love, Friendship, and Charity have any Resemblance of his transcendent Love to Mankind, we may excite in our selves the remembrance of it, and draw a faint Image of our Saviour, in the Person of *Joseph*, when *he makes himself* Gen. 45. 4.
known to his Brethren, bids them come near unto ^{15.}
him, falls on their neck and kisses them, and weeps over them with the tears of Joy and Affection.

That God should sanctifie our Nature, when sunk into Corruption; take us into the nearest Relation to himself; and be numbred amongst the Children of Men; this was an Act of loving Kindness, that must necessarily win upon us, and for ever indear him to us. And this is heightned by the End for which he came into the World; *to save Sinners*; which is the

Second Particular to be consider'd. His Nativity, his whole Life, his Sufferings, his Death, were the means he thought fit to use in pursuing this End, and carrying on the work of our Salvation; which was great and wonderfull, as to the Persons for whom it was wrought; the Evils from which they were de-

liver'd; and the Happiness that was purchased for them. And

1st, As to the Persons for whom it was wrought, who were Sinners and Enemies; yet for their sakes was he born; for those that had forfeited his Favour, combin'd with his inveterate Adversary the Devil, and liv'd in an obstinate Contempt and Defiance of him.

Man in his best estate was as a worm in the sight of God, had nothing in him, that could deserve the constant Care of Providence, that watch'd over and attended upon him. But he was God's Creature, and God not only preserv'd him in Being, but design'd to raise him to the utmost Perfection that he was capable of, and to make him still more capable of more Perfection.

But Man disobey'd his God, and neglected those easy Conditions that were prescrib'd to him; and by breaking down the bounds that were set, open'd a way by which a train of Sins might enter in; and their dreadfull Consequences, Pains, Diseases and Death, flow'd in with a mighty Deluge, and spread themselves over the whole Race of Mankind: When he had brought himself into this deplorable State, and abus'd those Advantages that were peculiar to him, and distinguish'd him from the inferiour Ranks of Beings: His Reason was enslav'd and forc'd to obey his vile Lusts and Affections, which it could not but disapprove, and know to be far beneath it self.

And

manifested in our Redemption.

85

And tho' our All-wise Creator upon a survey of every thing that he had made, pronounc'd of them, that they were very Good; yet in Man, when fallen, he saw those Qualities, that were an abomination to him, that were directly contrary to his Pure and Holy Nature, his unerring Will. He beheld him cover'd with Shame, wallowing in his Pollution: His innocent Passions were perverted, and grown almost entirely evil; and his Heart was as a fountain of Iniquity. The Posterity of our unhappy Parents joyned hand in hand, and resolv'd to provoke God; to *trea-* Rom. 2. 5.
sure up wrath against the Day of wrath, by aspiring to the highest degrees, to the fullest measures of Wickedness; and too many of them endeavour'd to imitate, express, and shew forth the Malice of Satan; to give all the Malignity, Blackness, and Horrour to their Guilt, that it could possibly receive.

But notwithstanding we thus hated him with a perfect hatred, had banish'd all thoughts of Peace, and refus'd to be Reconciled, to hearken to his kind Invitations to Repentance; yet still he lov'd us; and he so lov'd us, that he gave his only Son to be clothed with our Flesh, and in an Human Body to satisfy for our Sins, and close the wide distance that was between us. We had nothing but our Misery to plead for us; and even this we had chosen; but the Eye of God look'd down upon us, and pitied us, and our tender hearted Saviour thought it an Under-

taking worthy of himself, to come into the World to save it: Which brings me,

2dly, To the Evills from which we are deliver'd, our Sins, and the Punishment that hung over us. We had sold our selves into the Service, and were under the Dominion of those accursed Spirits, that continually solicit and entice us to do Evil. Our own Strength was turn'd against us, and even a part of our selves was joyn'd in an Alliance with those Temptations that crowded in upon us on every side. Our own Affections were brib'd to betray, and deliver us up bound unto them; the Chains of Sin had taken fast hold of us; and such was the force of the Delusion that had pass'd upon us, that we were fond of those Chains. We had sinn'd our selves into a Custom, and almost a Necessity of sinning, worn away, and eras'd our notions of Good and Evil, and brought a hardness and stupidity upon our Conscience; A night of Ignorance cover'd it, and our Condition very much resembled that of the Apostate Angels, that are confin'd to *Everlasting*

Jude v. 6. *Darkness.*

But the Son of God has visited us in Prison, and by the word of his Power commanded us to arise. He hath loos'd our Fetters, and proclaim'd Liberty to the Captives. He hath renewed our Strength, and by the assistance of his Grace has enabled us to resist, and stand the shock of all our Adversaries. Our frail weak Resolutions are supported by the Almighty,

Isa. 61. 1.

manifested in our Redemption.

87

mighty, and we are like those that are recover'd into Health, and return'd from the gates of Death, or like the *Man lame from his Mother's Womb, that was laid at the beautifull Gate of the Temple, unto whom Peter said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk; and he took him by the right hand, and lift him up, and immediately his Feet and Ankle bones receiv'd strength; and he leaping stood up and walked, and he entred with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.* Acts 3. 2, 6, 7, 8.

Nor has the Blessed *Jesus* only freed us from the Power of Sin, but from the dreadful expectation of inexpressible Torments without intermission, and without end. The sense of our Guilt sate with its full weight upon us; and we look'd back upon our past Actions with Indignation against our selves, and forward with Fear, with Anguish, and bitterness of Soul: our Misery daily grew upon us; and as the evil Day approach'd, it gave us a foretast of it self, and *the Worm that never dies*, Mark 9. 44. was already knawing us to the Heart. The Sentence was pass'd, our Doom fix'd, and, as we believ'd, never to be repeal'd; we were shut out of Paradise; and behind us was a *flaming Sword*, to guard the Entrance of it, Gen. 3. 24. and before us Hell gaping to devour us. Sinfull Man could not presume to stand in the Gap, and even unspotted Innocence (could it have been found among all the Sons of Men) was not able to make an Atonement.

But

The Goodness of God

But when we had utterly despair'd of Mercy, and had given our selves up as lost for ever; Christ Jesus came into the World to procure a Pardon for us on our Repentance, and enliven us with these words of Comfort,
 Mat. 9. 2. *be of good cheer, your Sins are forgiven you.* He turned away his Father's wrath, and shew'd us
 Col. 2. 14. *the light of his Countenance: He blotted out the hand writing that was against us;* and assur'd us that God would yet be *Gracious*, that he was yet willing to be *intreated*.

This surely must pour in Rivers of Pleasure into the Hearts of the condemn'd Prisoners,
 Rev. 7. 17. *and wipe away all Tears from their Eyes,* to be thus restor'd to themselves, and again begotten into Life. With what Joy and Surprise must we suppose, that the two Sisters, *Mart*
tha and *Mary*, embrac'd their Brother *Laza*
rus, when *Jesus* call'd him out of the Grave
 Joh. 11. 39. *and bade him live, after he had been dead four Days!* with the same and much more must every one that has any sense of Happiness or Misery receive this welcome News, that *Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners*, and to deliver them from everlasting Death. When the Patriarchs told their Father, that *Joseph*
 Gen. 45 26, 27, 28. *was yet Alive, and was Governour over all the Land of Egypt, his Heart fainted, for he believ'd them not:* But when he saw the Wagons which *Joseph* had sent to carry him; the Spirit of *Jacob* their Father reviv'd; and *Israel* said it is enough, *Joseph my Son is yet Alive.* And shall not every Sinner revive with him, since we are Happy,

as much beyond our Expectation, in being rescued from certain Misery, and not only taken up out of the Pit into which we were fallen, but rais'd to a delightfull view of an Inheritance in the Heavens: which is,

3dly, The Happiness that was purchas'd for us. This was infinitely more than we could possibly desire, more than we could, whilst pure and innocent, deserve. 'Twas for this end that *God was found in fashion as a Man*, that he might make us Heirs of a Kingdom, and be himself (which he only could be) the Author of our Salvation. 'Twas for this Reason that when *the blessed among Women, the Virgin Mary*, visited the Mother of St John the Baptist, *as soon as the voice of her Salutation sounded in her Ears, the Babe leaped in her Womb for Joy.* Phil. 2. 8. Luke 1. 28. v. 44.

Behold the Criminal is again admitted into the favour of God, has all his Sins done away, not to be remembred any more against him, if he Repent of them; and his God vouchsafes to dwell with him, that he may dwell for evermore in his Presence; and derive from *the Fountain of Light*, those large communications of Knowledge and Pleasure that will encrease to all Eternity, as his Faculties are enlarg'd to receive them. 'Twas for this *Consolation*, that the good old *Simeon waited till he had seen the Lord's Christ*; and when *the Child Jesus was brought into the Temple, he took him up in his Arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace according to* Luke 2. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

to thy word, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation. When he beheld his Saviour, he was willing to be dismissed from, to resign up his Life. He wanted nothing to compleat his satisfaction here below, and he was almost possess'd of his everlasting Habitation, which is above: his Desires were lost in Enjoyment, and *all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them,* must seem as a trifle to him, and fall far short of that ravishing Delight that sprung up in his Heart, while he was meditating on those great things that God would do *for the Gentiles, and for his People Israel.* And are we not prepar'd to speak with Thanksgiving of the Goodness of God to sinfull Men? which is the

Third Particular to be consider'd. Whether we look abroad upon the World, or turn our Eyes into our selves, the standing Proofs of the Divine Goodness are before us, and strike with a force upon our Minds that cannot be resisted: unless they are harder than *the nether Milstone,* they must necessarily receive and retain the Impression; as oft as we think that *we live, move, and have our Being,* we must also think of our Almighty Benefactor. But Life and all the Comforts of it are as nought, if compar'd with our wonderfull Redemption, which is *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the Love of God.* The bare mention of the Name of Jesus fills us with an imperfect sense of that unspeakable Mercy, that is

manifested in our Redemption.

91

too big for us to comprehend. That God should enter into a Second Covenant with his frail Creatures, and not consume them in an instant for breaking the First: That he should suffer any Expiation to be made, and be himself the Sacrifice: this puzzles our Reason, and baffles the Wisdom of those intelligent Spirits that attend upon the Throne of God, and *see him face to face.*

1 Cor. 13.

12.

The Angels that sinn'd against him are forever fallen, *can find no place of Repentance,* *The door is shut* against them, and the Sentence of Banishment from God's Presence, stands unchangeable. But Man, tho' equally unable to justify himself, is rais'd again to that Dignity which he had forfeited. And God is made like unto him, that he may be restor'd to the Image of God. The work of the Creation expresses and gives us a lively draught of God's Goodness, in that he who was infinitely Happy in himself, and depended only on his own All-sufficient Fullness, for the continuance of his Happiness, did yet create a World of Beings, for this end only that they might be Partakers with him. But that he should so far regard any of these, when they had by their Ingratitude thrown themselves out of his Protection, as to beseech them to be Reconcil'd, to invite them with the tenderness of a Parent, and woo and importune them to have Compassion on their Souls; to consider their own Case, and to be wise for their everlasting Interest: that he should speak

Heb. 12. 17.

Mat. 25. 10.

to

to them friendly, and address himself to them, as a Man like themselves, as one descended from the same common Parent; that he should give Liberty to those that had been perversly fond of Slavery, forgive them, when they had refus'd to be at peace with him, and encourage them to come unto him by the Promise of *an exceeding great Reward*; this must engage and employ our Thoughts here and hereafter, and we can only fall down and Adore, and Wonder. All the Riches of God's Goodness that were open'd to the view of the first Martyr St *Stephen*, are graciously offer'd to us; and shall we not break out in the words of the Psalmist, *Lord what is Man, that thou art mindfull of him, and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him!*

Gen. 15. 1.

Psal. 8. 4.

Fourthly, We are to consider the Returns that we ought to make to God, for this Instance of his Goodness.

And the *First* of these is Thanksgiving, which is a most delightfull Service. This Part of our Duty, is most especially its own Reward; and if we perform this aright, we shall (to the utmost of our Power) *do the Will of our Father on Earth, as it is done in Heaven*. For this is the Employment of *Spirits and Just Men made perfect*, and this the end of all their Operations, that the Name of God may be glorified, and they may tell the wonders of his Love. And we are now upon a Subject, that will still afford new matter of Praise, that

Mat. 6. 10.

Heb. 12. 23.

claims

claims every Expression of our Gratitude: and if we fix our thoughts upon it, we shall find our Debt still increasing, and our Obligations to God more than ever we can discharge. The Devout Psalmist calls upon the Psal. 146. Brutes and inanimate Creatures to pay their Tribute with him, and in one Choir, to magnify God, together. But their united Voices, *tho' like the sound of many Waters,* could not Rev. 1. 15. sufficiently Praise him. Had God reveal'd himself to us only by this Dispensation, the Birth of our Saviour, it would require a vast Eternity to give the Glory due unto him; and we might sing Hallelujahs for ever and ever; and have more and more Reason to repeat them.

2dly, We must receive these glad Tidings with a Religious Joy, and inflame and raise our Minds to the highest Pitch that we can. We must rejoyce, as those that are Redeem'd from the depth of Misery, that are *deliver'd from the hand of the Enemy.* We were brought low, and in the time of trouble we cried for help, but had no one to fly unto for Succour. For we had provoked and wearied with our Transgressions, him who alone was able to save; and we durst not stand before him, we could not hope for Mercy; but yet the Lord hath heard our Cry, *the Lord is our Helper.* Let Heb. 13. 6. us therefore break forth into Joy, *for unto us* Luke 2. 11. *this Day is born a Saviour.*

The Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, runs forth to meet him, on his return, with

Luke 15.
23, 24.

with an abundance of gladness, prepares a Feast, and *kills the fatted Calf*, that they might *Eat and be merry; for this his Son, was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.* And hath not the Prodigal much more reason to rejoyce because his Father hath forgotten his past Follies, hath a tender Compassion on him, and calls him again his Son?

v. 10.

There is joy in the Presence of the Angels of God, over one Sinner that Repenteth; and shall not every Sinner joyn with them, with the height of Pleasure, in that he is assur'd, his Repentance will be accepted?

Mark 12.
30.

3dly, We must love God with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength. And surely there needs no Art of perswasion, to work upon and prevail with us, to yield up our selves intirely to him; for we are his, as all our Faculties were his Gift, and we could not have been at all, had not his word given us a Being. And we are doubly his, as he hath bought us with a Price, and renew'd us to a better Life. His Love to us in contriving and bringing to pass our Redemption, lays the strongest Obligations upon us, to offer a Sacrifice to him of pure Affection. We must serve him with the greatest warmth, the most ardent Devotion, and kindle a Flame in our Breasts, that shall continually burn and ascend towards Heaven: we shall be guilty of the most astonishing Ingratitude, if we can think or speak of God's Loving kindness with coldness or indifference,

difference, or suffer any thing to come in competition with him. Every Action of our Lives must be done with regard to his Honour, and as it tends to promote it.

The endearing Name of Saviour is above all other Relations, and has all that is valuable in a Parent, a Brother, or a Friend, summ'd up, and comprehended in it: and whatever we owe to those that travelled in pains with us, that nourish'd us from the Breasts, that have their *Souls knit with ours*, 2 Sam. 18. 1. and love us as themselves; this and much more we owe to him that went through a train of Misery and Disgrace, that he might obtain a Pardon for our Sins, that were *as the Sand on the Sea shore*; and if any Motive Gen. 22. 17. can work upon us, we cannot but *love much to whom much is forgiven*.

4thly, And Lastly, The best return we can make, and the surest Proof of the sincerity of all the rest, is a regular, uniform Obedience to God's Commandments. This he may justly expect from us, since he has an undoubted right to it, and has enabled and encouraged us to perform it; if we are not the basest and most disingenuous of all Creatures, we shall think nothing that we can do too much, every thing too little for him who has done so much for us.

Notwithstanding he has manifested the greatness of his Power and Goodness in our behalf, yet he does not force us upon any Difficulty, but requires the most easy Duties of

of us, that recommend themselves to us, as our present Interest, and a part of our Reward.

And are these too hard for us, and do we murmur and repine against God? Should we not rather be ambitious of shewing our Gratitude, and undertake his Service with a Zeal that would make us delight *to run the Race that is set before us*? Should we not begin and set out with Chearfulness, as soon as we have any Knowledge of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and think our Time too short, only because it constrains us to leave our work imperfect?

But farther, we must remember that our Salvation is offer'd to us upon Conditions, and if we do not perform these, we may yet fall from it. *Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners*; but yet if we continue in our Sins, God has left us a Power of being Miserable; we may yet use our Liberty, and we may abuse it to our own Destruction.

But let us so live as it becomes those, that are deliver'd from endless Misery, and have the certain hopes of everlasting Happiness; let us Glorify God here that we may Reign with him hereafter, and for ever Praise and Adore him for his infinite Goodness to sinfull Men.

Now

manifested in our Redemption. 97

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us, unto him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without End. Amen.

Eph. 3. 20,
21.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.



G

God

Now

Go

S

U

—

ay

an

th

yo

w

P

un

T

Ser

God the only just Object of Fear.

A

S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY,
OF
O X F O R D.
At St M A R Y'S.

St Luke XII. 4, 5.

— *I say unto you, my Friends be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forwarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath kill'd, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

THIS Admonition was given by our Saviour to his Disciples, to guard them against the Fear of Tortures, and that dreadfull variety of shapes,

God the only just Object

in which they would behold the King of Terrors. That this seasonable Advice might make the deepest Impression upon them, he bespeaks their Attention in the most engaging manner. *I say unto you, my Friends be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath kill'd, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.* Which words may be Explain'd to this Effect.

I have taken you into the nearest Relation to my self, into the number of my particular Friends; But this instead of yielding you any Temporal Advantage, will expose you to all the Evils which the Malice and Power of Men can contrive and inflict, *for the Disciple must be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord;* yet be not afraid of their Tyranny, but consider the utmost extent of their Power. They may torment the Body, which is naturally subject to a multitude of Pains and Diseases; *They may shake those Houses of Clay, whose foundation is in the Dust, which are crush'd before the Moth;* They may contract the space of that uncertain Life, which in its best Estate, is but *a Span long;* and they may bring you into the *Chambers of Death.* But *there the Wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest; there the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the Oppressor; the small and the great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master.*

The

The most mighty of the Sons of Men can only reach the Body with all their Violence; and after they have destroy'd that corruptible Building, *they have no more that they can do: for the Almighty has set them their Bounds that they shall not pass; and hitherto shall they come, but no further.* The Soul still survives, and dreads not *the Sting of Death, nor the Victory of the Grave,* and this better part may enjoy its proper Happiness, in spite of all the rage and envy of Men and Devils, and may ascend to the blessed Presence of God, *where there is no Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain.* Fear not therefore *them that kill the Body.*

But since the Passion of Fear was not planted in you in vain, I will shew you an Object to which you should direct it; let it be plac'd on that great and terrible God, to whom alone belong the Issues of Life and Death. Let it be your chief care not to offend him, for *in him you live, move, and have your Being;* and without him in the midst of Life you are in Death; all the Instruments of Torture are in his hand; when you Sin against him, *his Arrows will stick fast in you,* and he will send forth an Infinite variety of Diseases, with the Breath of his Displeasure; *when he is Angry all your Days are gone; and you will bring your Tears to an end as it were a tale that is told.* He can make your *Plagues wonderfull* in this World, and render your Body, a Burden too heavy for you to bear. *And when he calls Man to Destruction, and says, come again ye Children of*

Men; Behold he taketh away, who can binder him? who will say unto him, what dost thou? If God will not withdraw his Anger, the Proud helpers do stoop under him.

Job. 9. 12.
23.

And his Power is not confin'd to this World: all the Miseries of Life and Agonies of Death, are as nothing in comparison of those dreadful Evils which he has prepar'd in the Place of Torment. *Who knoweth the Power*

Luk. 16. 28.

Psal. 90. 11.

of his Anger? He can raise up your frail Bodies from the Grave, to die Eternally, fill them with new, and inexpressible Pains, and make them far more sensible of Misery. And he can punish the Soul in Hell, and turn all its Thoughts and Reflections upon it self, for ever to prey upon it, with a *Worm that never dies, and a Fire that never shall be quenched.* Therefore I charge you, fear this Almighty Being; I cannot too often repeat it, *yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*

Mark 9. 48.

This Explanation of our Saviour's Words, is, I hope, agreeable to his Design; and if it is, let me intreat you in his Name, to consider and regard it. For though we trust that the Providence of God will defend us from those Calamities which were the Portion of the first Followers of Christ; yet we cannot be too much upon our Guard, whilst Faction, Profaneness and Infidelity, breath forth their Threatnings against us, and exalt themselves with Scoffing and Insolence. And however it can never be unseasonable to repeat our Saviour's Admonition, since we are too apt all-

ways

ways to fear the Power of Men, and to sin against God, rather than suffer Evils far less than Death; and are forgetfull of the Power of God, *who is able to cast both Body and Soul into Hell*, when by our Sins he is justly displeas'd. Let us therefore consider,

First, How little Reason we have to be afraid of Men, since *after they have kill'd the Body, they have no more that they can do.* And

Secondly, How much reason we have to Fear God, since *after he has kill'd, he has Power to cast into Hell.* And

Thirdly, Let us make some Observations upon both. And

First, We are to consider how little reason we have to be afraid of Men, since *after they have kill'd the Body, they have no more that they can do*: Our Nature is endow'd with a quick and tender sense of Evil, and cannot but tremble at its Approaches. And this would be of the greatest Advantage to us, did we judge aright of the different kinds of Evil, and did our Fear rise in Proportion to them. For we could never deviate from our Duty, did we form a just estimate of the fatal Consequences of Sin: and we should hold fast our Innocence in defiance of all the Threatnings of unreasonable Men, did we thoroughly know even the worst Effects of their Displeasure.

And

God the only just Object

And here it must be confess'd that the Wisdom of God does sometimes permit our Life to fall into the hands of the Sons of Violence, and nothing but a sinfull Compliance will be accepted for its Ransom. But this Life that is in their Power, is also obnoxious to innumerable Accidents, that can equally injure us, and hasten our Dissolution. The weakest thing in Nature can *turn us to Destruction*, and every trifle can be a Proof of our Frailty. We are not only subject to sharp and formidable Diseases, that attack us with an Appearance of Strength, and weary us out with the Continuance of Pain. But we are also liable to secret Disorders that can scarcely be perceiv'd or distinguish'd, and yet are pernicious to us. Even Health it self, when it is in its greatest Perfection, exposes us to Danger, and by a surprizing turn is changed into an incurable Distemper. And our Blood when it flows with a brisk and lively Stream, is often carried beyond its Bounds, and boyls up with a restless and unquenchable Flame. Every draught of Air may be charg'd with the Darts of Death; and the most despicable Insect, the meanest and most inconsiderable of Creatures may break our feeble Frame. And the most powerfull Tyrant can do no more.

Why then do our Adversaries vaunt themselves against us? Is it this that fills them with Pride, that they can destroy such poor weak Creatures, and take away a Life that can-

canno
may
King
a dea
be cu
our Y
an H
gress
that
frail
of O
If
our Y
Expe
such
that
migh
let th
taste
An
Inno
then
main
Purc
hard
Bu
may
Terr
are f
seafe
Bu
lice
wear

cannot be preserv'd without the strictest care? may we not say to them, as *David* did to the King of *Israel*, *After whom do you pursue? after a dead Dog; after a Flea.* Were it our Lot to be cut off for doing our Duty in the Days of our Youth, we might remember that we have an Host of Evils to pass through in the Progress of Life; and that it is hardly probable, that we should escape them all, and keep our frail Body in safety, till the naturall Decays of Old Age come upon it.

If we should be taken away in the midst of our Years, we should even then have sufficient Experience of the Miseries of this World, and such a Prospect of the Cares and Infirmities that would otherwise one Day fall upon us, as might incline us to say unto God, *Lord now let thy Servants depart in Peace,* before we have tasted of the Evils to come.

And if we must either give up our Life or Innocence in the Close of our Years, surely then we have so small a Portion of time remaining, that we cannot pay so dear for its Purchase, as to Sin against God; nay we can hardly wish for its Preservation.

But perhaps you will think that Evil Men may render Death it self more exceedingly Terrible, and try you with such Tortures, as are far more dreadfull than the worst of Diseases.

But know assuredly, that when their Malice does its worst, and their Invention is quite wearied in endeavouring to find out new Methods

thods of Cruelty; when their Power is stretch'd to its utmost Length, and exercises it self in all the variety of ways that lie within their reach; they cannot torment you with sharper Pains, than are frequently endur'd in the Fits of Gout and Stone, and many other Distempers, in which the Body is prey'd upon by its own Humours, and gradually destroys it self.

If the Calamities which Men bring upon you, are of a long Continuance, they cannot be more tedious than the Misery of a lingering Sickness. And if they are sharp and exquisite they will soon yield you a Release, and put an end to themselves.

And then their Power can extend no farther; and without the Permission of God, it cannot extend so far. And we may use the words of the Psalmist; *Why boastest thou thy self in Mischief O mighty Man? the Goodness of God endureth continually.* But this is all that they can do, if God in his Wisdom should not restrain them. If they kill us, we shall but die a Temporal Death. And this indeed would be shocking to Human Nature, were our Misery and our Being to have an end together.

But our Prospect is not shut up with our Life, *Our Hope is full of Immortality.* And they cannot disappoint us of our Hope, or cut off our Expectation. They may say unto themselves, *Let us Oppress the poor Righteous Man, Let us not spare the Widow, nor Reverence the ancient gray Hairs of the Aged. Let our Strength be* the

the L
found
Man
may k
and l
But a
Souls
and th
of the
ture i
to be u
God c
to be a

Th
Cruel
Body
its A
ming
is far
Malic
Body
in a r
solv'd
that l
pinef

It i
vest H
doubt
as a
that l
at the
his Sk
he sha

the Law of Justice; for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. Let us examin the Just Man with Despitemess and Torture, that we may know his Meekness, and prove his Patience; and let us condemn him with a shamefull Death. But after all the efforts of their Malice, *the* Wisd. 3. 1, 2, 3. *Souls of the Righteous are in the Hands of God, and there shall no Torment touch them. In the sight of the Unwise they seem to die, and their Departure is taken for Misery, and their going from us to be utter Destruction: But they are in Peace. For* Wisd. 2. 23. *God created Man to be Immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity.*

The Wicked may triumph in their wanton Cruelty, and insult over that once wretched Body which they destroy'd. They may scatter its Ashes under every Wind of Heaven, or mingle them with the Waters. But the Soul is far above the impotent Attempts of their Malice, and is assur'd, that its Companion the Body will again return to it, and be rebuilt in a more beautifull Order, never to be dissolv'd any more. What then is Death to him that has a certain Prospect of Eternal Happiness?

It might shake the Confidence of the bravest Heathen, that had but a confus'd and doubtfull Notion of a future Life. But it seems as a thing of nought to the Man that Job 19. 25, 26. *knows that his Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth, and tho' after his Skin, Worms destroy his Body, yet in his Flesh he shall see God.*

It.

God the only just Object

It was this Expectation that supported the Righteous *Job* under the most adverse Fortune, and the strangest Complication of Diseases. And though he told us in the words
 Job 6. 2, 3. of Complaint, that *if his Grief was thoroughly weighed, and his Calamity laid in the Balances together, it would be heavier than the Sand of the Sea*; Yet neither the load of Evils that oppress'd him, nor the suggestions of his Wife, could prevail upon him to curse God. And
 Job 2. though *his Bones were pierc'd in him, in the Night Season, and his Sinews took no rest*, yet he nobly resolv'd, *till I die, I will not remove my Integrity from me; my Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my Heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.*

And those Glorious Saints were sustain'd with the same chearfull Hope, *who were Tortur'd, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection.*
 Heb. 11. 35.

And it was this that Comforted the Disciples of *Jesus*, and enabled them to look with an undaunted Confidence upon the Face of their Adversaries, and even upon all the Terrors of Death; with this they disappointed their Accusers, and rebuked and mortified their Pride and Malice; when they stood unshaken amidst the worst that could befall them, and plainly told them, they would be Happy, notwithstanding all that they had done. And with what Confusion did their Persecutors look down upon themselves, when they knew that they could do no more!

And

And when Heaven is set before us, and we have such Examples to encourage us, shall we be afraid to die? shall we be solicitous to save our fleeting Life, and unwilling to lanch forth into a Blessed Eternity? shall we Sin rather than suffer any little despicable Evil, any Calamity that is short of Death; shall we forfeit our Peace and Innocence, rather than strive against a vicious Custom, or bear the Frowns and Rebukes of the Mighty? No! let us shew our selves Men and Christians, and fix all our Fear upon its proper Object; and consider,

Secondly, How much reason we have to Fear God, since *after he has kill'd, he has Power to cast into Hell.* Were we to look no farther than the Miseries of this present Life, we should find that these short temporary Evils are entirely at the Disposal of Almighty God, and he can punish us with Plagues that are far more in number, higher in Degree, and longer in Duration, than the Evils which any Earthly Power can inflict upon us: The Curses which God denounc'd against the Disobedient Jews, are enough to make the Ears of every one that heareth them to tingle. If ye despise my Statutes, or if your Souls abhor my Judgments; I will even appoint over you Terrour, Consumption and the burning Ague, that shall consume the Eyes, and cause sorrow of Heart, and ye shall sow your Seed in vain, for your Enemies shall eat it; and I will set my Face against you, and ye shall

1 Sam. 3.
11.
Lev. 26. 15,
16, 17, 18,
19.

God the only just Object

Deut. 28.
19, 20.

v. 58, 59.

shall be slain before your Enemies, and they that hate you shall rule over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you; and if ye will not yet for all this, hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your Sins. And I will break the Pride of your Power, and I will make your Heaven as Iron, and your Earth as Brass. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee, Cursing, Vexation, and Rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroy'd, and until thou perish quickly; because of the Wickedness of thy Doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Law, that are written in this Book, that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearfull Name, the Lord thy God, then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderfull, and the Plagues of thy Seed, even great Plagues, and of long continuance, and sore Sickneses, and of long continuance.

Deut. 32.
22, 23, 24.

Nothing can be more terrible, than the Description which God has given us of his fierce Indignation against his Sinfull People,

A fire is kindled in mine Anger, and shall burn to the lowest Hell, and shall consume the Earth with her Increase, and set on fire the Foundations of the Mountains. I will heap Mischiefs upon them, I will spend mine Arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with Hunger, and devoured with burning Heat, and with bitter Destruction. I will also send the teeth of Beasts upon them, with the Poison of Serpents of the Dust; the Sword without, and Terrour within shall destroy both the Young

man

*man
Man
be, a
make
any t
up my
I whe
hold o
Enem
will n
Sword
impos
we c
were
corre
People
thee i
before
that t
Ho
O Go
times,
the Po
fore th
as a a
upon t
But
train
Life,
ments
them
Aft
merab*

of Fear.

III

man and the Virgin, the Suckling also with the Man of Gray hairs. See now that I, even I, am ^{Deut. 32.} he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I ^{39, 40, 41, 42.} make alive, I wound, and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my Hand; For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever; if I whet my glittering Sword, and mine hand take hold on Judgment, I will render Vengeance to mine Enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine Arrows drunk with Bloud, and my Sword shall devour Flesh. We must think it impossible to stand before an angry God, if we consider those astonishing Evils which were proposed to David's choice, when he corrected him by measure for numbring the People. Shall seven Years of Famine come unto ^{2 Sam. 24.} thee in thy Land? or wilt thou flee three Months ^{13.} before thine Enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three Days Pestilence in thy Land?

How wonderfull art thou in thy Judgments O God, thou canst shew thy great Strength at all ^{Wisd. 11. 21, 22.} times, when thou wilt, and who may withstand the Power of thine Arm? For the whole World before thee is as a little grain of the Ballance, yea, as a drop of the Morning Dew that falleth down upon the Earth.

But the heaviest Calamities, and the longest train of Afflictions, that can be born in this Life, are but imperfect Shadows of the Torments of Hell. And these are the Portion of them that fear not God.

After he has punish'd them with an innumerable company of Diseases, and with various

rious

God the only just Object

rious kinds of Death; his Vengeance has yet greater Evils in store for them, Evils that infinitely exceed the Consummation of Earthly Misery. For there is now even in the most wretched State, some little respite, some Intermission; for Nature is unable to bear the whole weight of any Sorrow or Trouble continually; and were not its edge sometimes taken off, and its force abated, it would soon be stupified with Pain, and be insensible of its Condition.

And we are not without hopes of Amendment, to sooth and alleviate our Grief, or however we have an Assurance that it will not last long, it draws towards a Period, even while we are complaining of it; and every fleeting Hour bears away a part of our Misery.

But it is not so with the Damn'd. Their Punishment is allways exquisite, without any glimmering Hope, any shew of Comfort, any possibility of coming to an End. And we cannot make a true Judgment of it, unless we could measure the Difference between the Moments of our Life, and the Ages of Eternity; or could tell how far worse it is to be dying for ever, than to struggle for a short time with the Agonies of a Death-Bed.

We should be struck with Horrour and Amazement, did we know the full meaning of those dreadful words, *he can cast both Body and Soul into Hell*. The Place that is set apart for the scene of endless Woe, is at an infinite
Distance

Dist
the F

Wi
Life,
the M
when

tenan
ment

ness of

Am

of fee

accur

of Go

Chain

Am

deplo

fer all

whole

the B

to re

ruptio

down

fullne

canno

might

losing

will f

ction

may li

tually

form

dure l

ing Fi

Serv

Distance from the Presence of God, who is the Fountain of Joy and Comfort.

Without him all the good things of this Life, can give us no Satisfaction; surely then the Miseries of the other must be intolerable, when he has withdrawn *the Light of his Countenance*. This must add weight to all the Torments of guilty Souls, and be the very *Blackness of their Darkness*. Psal. 4. 6.

And as they are depriv'd of the Happiness of seeing God; so they are confin'd to the accurs'd Society of the inveterate Adversaries of God and Men, who *are kept in everlasting Chains under Darkness*. Jude v. 6.

And both Body and Soul are cast into that deplorable State, that each of them may suffer all that it is capable of suffering, and the whole Man may be perfectly wretched. Were the Body to lie eternally in the Grave, and to return no more from the house of Corruption, the Wicked might rejoyce to lay down their Burden, and accept with Cheerfulness a Release from Life. But the Grave cannot hide them from the Wrath of the Almighty, nor can they have the benefit of losing their Being. But he that made them, will find them out in the Land of Destruction; and will raise up their Body, that it may live in eternal Torments, and be perpetually sensible of Pain and Sorrow; it will be form'd for a longer Duration, that it may endure lasting Misery, and *dwell with the devouring Fire*. Isa. 33. 14.

It is now too weak to bear the Continuance of any sharp and peircing Evil, and its frailty is unable to contend with it. It is liable to be crush'd in Peices by every Injury, and is ready to fall into the Dust, when it is shock'd by any Act of Violence. And Man that is *full of Misery*, may put this Question to his Enemy, *wilt thou break a Leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry Stubble?* But the sinfull Body will be rais'd with greater strength, that it may be an Object fit to suffer the Lashes of Divine Vengeance, and may be punish'd by Infinite Power to all Eternity.

Its Senses will have the quickest perception of things, that it may feel the keenest Edge of all its Torments, and be cut to the Heart with every Pain. Its Faculties will be affected with their full force, and be still equally capable of perceiving it. And God will afflict it with Evils, many more in number than all the Diseases of the several Generations of Men. *O God how great is the sum of them!* The Treasures of thy Vengeance, as well as of thy Goodness, are unsearchable. *Thy Judgments are like the great Deep.*

And who could *dwell with Everlasting burnings*, were the Body only to be Tormented? But the Soul, that once Glorious, that Immortal Being, will also bear its share of Punishment. In this Life it often withdraws it self from Evil, and refuses to take notice of Worldly Calamities, and secure within it self, it enjoys its peculiar Pleasures. But in Hell there

is no room to escape, it cannot fly from the Wrath of God. Its Thoughts will be perpetually gathering matter for the deepest Sorrow; and while they reach after that Happiness which they have forfeited, they will be griev'd for ever at the loss of it. It will upbraid and accuse it self for Madness and Folly, in being the cause of all its Woe.

The Memory will retain every thing that can add to its Grief, and heighten its Torments; and it will look forward to future Misery, that the present may be allways enlarg'd, both with ungratefull Reflections, and a melancholly Prospect. The deformity of Sin, will ever stare upon it; and the abus'd Goodness of God will compell it to acknowledge the Justice of its Condemnation.

That Infinite Spirit that is provoked by Sin, will pour in fresh Troubles upon the Mind, and gall and wound it with inexpressible Anguish and Remorse. Every Passion will be let loose to torment it, and distract and confound the Soul; and Despair will cast it down into the depth of Misery, and tell it day by day, that its Chains can never be loos'd, and the wide Gulf between Hell and Heaven can *never* be pass'd. Luke 16.

No difference of Time can make the least Alteration in its State; but after it has been Tormented for Thousands of Ages, its Torments will be still equally distant from an End.

It is therefore a fearfull thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. 10. 31.

Having consider'd how little Reason we have to be Afraid of Men, and how much Reason we have to Fear God; we are now to make some Observations upon both. And

1st, We cannot but observe, that they are strangely deceiv'd, that to avoid the Anger of Men, incur the Displeasure of God. This is obvious to any one, that will allow that there is any Difference between the Strength of Mortal Men, and the Power of an Everliving God; between them that can only hurt the Body, and him that can destroy both Body and Soul; between them that can only oppress them in this Life, and him that can make them Miserable for Ever.

How fatally then are they mistaken, that give up the Happiness of their Souls, and the Favour of God to purchase Peace with Men, who can only take away a Mortal Life, and whose Life it self is but a Blast!

And they are yet more deluded, because they are generally disappointed, even in those Ends which they foolishly propose to themselves; for they divert the Danger but for a time, and afterwards it comes with its entire weight upon them; and those very Men whom they hope to please by Treachery and Cowardise, do at length treat them with just Contempt and Abhorrence.

2^{dly}, We may observe that if we Fear Men more than God, we shall expose our selves to the vainest and most extravagant Fears. *God*

alone

alone
rence.
whom
with
weigh
Passio
and n
coura

W
ende
But t
Princ
of D
mean
with
our n
rathe
selve
despi

W
of Pu
gean
Fear
the b
not b
afraid
then
with
the L
For
nothi
that
dares

alone is greatly to be Fear'd, and had in Reve- Pfal. 89. 7.
 rence. And if we do not render Fear to him to Rom. 13. 7.
 whom Fear is due, we shall be driven to and fro
 with every Temptation, and sink under the
 weight of the least of Evils. For unless our
 Passion is rightly plac'd, it will prey upon us,
 and raise up a Thousand Adversaries to dis-
 courage us.

We may procure a few Moments Peace by
 endeavouring to pacify a vicious Multitude.
 But this Peace has no sure Foundation, no
 Principles to support it. Every Appearance
 of Danger will disturb our Quiet, and our
 mean and abject Spirit will be over power'd
 with Dread and Astonishment. And tho' in
 our mistaken Policy we stand in awe of Men,
 rather than God, yet we cannot screen our
 selves from the Fear of him whom we madly
 despise.

We shall still be pursued with the Thoughts
 of Punishment, and the Expectation of Ven-
 geance; and when we have given every vain
 Fear the Dominion over us, and tremble at
 the breath of Mens Displeasure; when we can-
 not bear the sight of an angry World, and are
 afraid to look into our own Breasts; we shall
 then begin to know, what it is to contend
 with an Almighty Arm; and *the Terrours of*
the Lord will set themselves in Aray against us.
 For our Contempt of him is unnatural, and
 nothing can be more absurd, than the Wretch
 that fears the Reproach of Men, and yet
 dares to defy the Lord his Maker.

3dly, and Lastly, We may observe that the Fear of God is the only Defence against all other Fears. When we have liv'd under an habitual sense of his Majesty, and with a constant regard to his Perfections, we shall be truly perswaded that no Evil is to be compar'd with his Displeasure. And all the Calamities of the World will dwindle away, and seem to be *less than nothing*, when we have thoroughly consider'd, how far short they fall of the Miseries of the Damn'd. And having studied to avoid that bitter Portion, our Heart will be at Peace, and out of the reach of those lesser Cares, that disquiet a sinfull World. Religion is the only true Principle of Courage, and they alone can shew an undaunted Bravery, that have liv'd so that they are not afraid to die.

Prov. 28. 1.

Wisd. 17.

11.

The Wicked flee when no Man pursueth, but the Righteous are bold as a Lion. Wickedness condemn'd by her own Witness, is very timorous, and being press'd with Conscience allways forecasteth grievous Things. But the Righteous need not be afraid. In the midst of all the Storms of States, and Revolutions of Kingdoms, they stand unmoveable, and have no different measures to take upon the Changes of Affairs. For the Law of God is their constant guide, and their Duty is the Rule of their Practice. If they behold any Worldly Evils approaching towards them, they know that the Providence of God can secure them from Danger, and will certainly do it, if it is for their

Ad-

Advantage. But if not, they are assur'd, that they have escaped infinitely greater Evils; and they see all the Waves of this troublesome World, breaking themselves upon the Shores of Life, and entirely swallow'd up, and lost in the Enjoyment of a Blessed Eternity. If therefore you have any value for Peace, any desire to be free from the restless Fear of Danger, of Death, and of Hell it self, *Fear him* who can make you Happy or Miserable now and for ever; *yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*



7

S

*Let
you*

T

us in
and u
afford
Ser

*The Duties of our Christian
Warfare.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at

BRIGHTWELL

I N

Oxford-shire.

St Luke. XII. 35.

*Let your Loyns be girded about, and
your Lights burning.*

THIS Charge was given by our
Blessed Saviour, who knew the Im-
portance of our Duty, the Dangers
and Difficulties that would attend
us in our Christian Warfare, and the shortness
and uncertainty of the Time that would be
afforded for the Performance of it.

Serm. VII.

He

The Duties of our

He gave it to his Disciples, who had many special Duties incumbent upon them, in the discharge of their high Commission, and were obliged to be in a continual readiness to go whithersoever their Lord should please to send them; to propagate the Gospel in the most Barbarous and Ignorant Countries; and to drink of the *bitter Cup of Martyrdom*, whensoever it should be given them to drink.

But this important Charge in its utmost Extent, was not peculiar to the Disciples, but lays an indispensable Obligation upon the Christians of all Ages. We must have *our Loyns girded about*, that is, be allways ready to do what we shall know to be our Duty, and perpetually upon our Guard against our Enemies, that lie in wait to ensnare and hinder us; and we must have *our Lights burning*, that is, we must constantly exercise our selves in the Practice of Virtue, and so improve and cultivate our Minds that we may not be found unprepar'd at the coming of our Lord.

This I take to be the meaning of our Saviour's Words. He commanded us to have *our Loyns girded about*, in allusion to the Custom and manner of dress that is us'd by Persons that are sent upon any extraordinary Business, that requires immediate Execution; for they are wont to gird their Garments closely about them, that they may not by loosely flowing, hinder dispatch, and entangle them in their Journey: and he commanded us to have *our Lights burning*, because we are

not

not aware, how soon the Night will come upon us, or in what Hour of the Night our Lord will call us. And we shall effectually answer his gracious Design, if

First, We are allways ready to do our Duty.

Secondly, If we stand upon our guard against the Devices of our Adversary. And

Thirdly, If we live in the daily Exercise and Practice of Virtue, that, *the Lord when he cometh may find us so doing.* And Luke 12. 43.

First, We must be allways ready to do our Duty. So short is the space of this Mortal Life, so near are we to the point of our Departure, even at our Entrance into it, that we ought to embrace every Opportunity, of performing our necessary Work, as if it were the last we should ever enjoy; and we should do the great business of Religion in the same manner, as the Jews were order'd to eat the Passover in that dreadfull Night, in which *the Lord executed Judgment against all the Gods of Egypt, and smote all the First-born in the Land.* Ex. 12. 12.
They eat it with their Loyns girded, their Shoes on their Feet, and their Staff in their hand, v. 11. expecting the sudden Call to depart *with their Children, their Flocks and their Herds.* v. 37. 38.

The Service that is requir'd of us is of such mighty Concernment, that we cannot make too much hast to Execute it, or be too apprehensive of the Danger of Delay. It must be

2 Kings 9.
1, 2, 3.

Joh. 21. 18.

be discharged immediately, like the Commission that was given to one of the Children of the Prophets, when *Elisha bid him gird up his Loyns, and take a Box of Oyl in his hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead, and Anoint Jehu King over Israel, and then open the door and flee, and tarry not.* And this Service is perfect Freedom, and therefore it should be undertaken with Cheerfulness, and with the same lively Spirit as animated St Peter, *when he was Young and girded himself, and went whithersoever he would.*

Our Saviour has represented our Condition as a state of War, and before we can enter into the Church Triumphant, we must pass through the Church Militant. And it is the part of a Soldier to be constantly ready to receive the Orders of his Commander; and he frequently receives special Instructions to prepare himself for an Alarm at Midnight, and to qualify himself for a punctual Obedience, in the very Instant that the appointed Word shall be given. And every Faithfull Soldier and Servant of Christ, must be equally dispos'd to do every Act of his Duty: and when his Conscience tells him this is expected from him, he must presently devote himself to it, and put forth all his Strength, without Repining, without Reluctance, and without Delay.

To this end he should keep himself disengaged from the things of this World, and never suffer his Affections to cleave to them; for if they have taken fast hold of us, and

won

won
tion
will
our
way
Chea
the C
H
Ruler
Heav
ensn
woul
of the
his g
obey
viour
To
fy ou
we h
befor
Follon
and b
Let i
preach
Lord,
them
and f
hand
Kingd
more
Father
tions,
these

won our Hearts by their flattering Insinuations, every Duty will seem difficult, and it will be almost impossible to perform it without Reserve; and instead of *running in the way of God's Commandments* with Delight and Chearfulness, we shall be press'd down with the Clog that hangs upon us. Pl. 119. 32.

How wretchedly did this draw back *the Ruler* that was not far from the Kingdom of Heaven! Had not his Heart been unhappily ensnar'd by the deceitfulness of Riches, he would have arriv'd at *the measure of the Stature of the fullness of Christ*. But this put a stop to his glorious Progress, and with-held him from obeying that one Command which our Saviour gave him. Luke 18. Eph. 4. 13.

To convince us that no Pretence can justify our preferring any thing before our Duty, we have two very remarkable Instances set before us in the Gospel. *Jesus said unto one, Follow me: but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my Father. And Jesus said unto him, Let the Dead bury their Dead, but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my House. and Jesus said unto him, No Man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.* What Pretences could be more specious than these, *to go and bury his Father*, and to *bid farewell* to his nearest Relations, and most Affectionate Friends? and yet these were not sufficient. Luke 9. 59, 60, 61, 62.

And

The Duties of our

And we are much rather to imitate the Example of *Abraham*, who went directly at the Command of God, even when he was
 Gen. 12. 1. commanded to *get him out from his Country, and from his Kindred, and from his Father's House*; and the Example of the Holy Apostles, who *arose and followed* the Blessed Jesus, as soon as
 Mat. 9. 9. he said unto them, *Follow me*.

And indeed if we consider, either the Master whom we are oblig'd to serve, or the Nature of our Service, or the inestimable Rewards which he has promis'd, to quicken and encourage us, we cannot but rejoyce to fulfill his Word, and make it our chief Desire, our earnest Study, our constant Endeavour, to please him.

He has shewn his Friendship to us, by all the Testimonies of Affection, by every Expression of Friendship; and if his leaving the highest Happiness and descending into the depth of Misery, to deliver us from eternal and unspeakable Torments, and raise us to endless and inconceivable Felicity, be enough to Oblige us, he has done enough to bind us for ever to him; and if we have any sense of these Obligations, our Heart must leap for Joy, at every Opportunity of acknowledging his Kindness.

If we sincerely love our Friend, and long to do him a real and lasting Service, as soon as the pleasing Opportunity offers it self, *the Fire kindles*, and our love carries us forth into Action, with a lively Chearfullness, an ardent Zeal,

Zeal,
 are e
 to o
 feign
 brace
 be re
 Ecsta
 An
 such
 us, h
 joyn'
 ture,
 our I
 allwa
 teach
 us W
 did w
 stand
 to re
 the V
 vant
 Obey
 as the
 in his
 that
 times
 we ha
 quick
 the S
 State,
 the M
 phet
 whose

Zeal, and a generous Activity. And if we are equally desirous to express our Gratitude to our Redeemer, equally mov'd with unfeigned Love to him, we shall eagerly embrace the Opportunity of serving him, and be ready to exert our whole strength with an Ecstasy of Joy and Pleasure.

And the Duty which he has enjoyn'd us, is such as would naturally recommend it self to us, had we no regard to the Person that enjoyn'd it; for it improves and adorns our Nature, is agreeable to that distinguishing Faculty our Reason, and keeps that glorious Lamp allways burning in its full Brightness: and by teaching us to Act like Men here, it will make us Wise *as the Angels* of God hereafter. And did we form a right judgment of it, we should stand dispos'd to do it, as young *Samuel* did to receive the word of God, when he answer'd the Voice of the Lord with, *Speak, for thy Servant beareth*: or rather, we should strive to Obey him, with the same Life and Vigour, as those Blessed Spirits do, that are allways in his Presence; even those *Thousand thousands that Minister to him; and those Ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before him*. And if we have our Loyns thus girded, and Act with quick Dispatch, and unwearied Industry, in the Service of God; we shall in the future State, resemble that glorious Embassadour of the Most High, that came down to the Prophet *Daniel*, who was clothed in Linnen, and whose Loyns were girded with fine Gold.

1 Sam. 3.
10.

Dan. 7. 10.

Dan. 10. 5.

And

The Duties of our

And the mention of our Reward seems to render all other Arguments needless, to persuade us to do our Duty; for one would think it impossible to doubt or delay, tho' it were but for a Moment, when an Eternity of perfect Happiness is the end of our Labours. We cannot surely refuse to Dedicate any Part of our Life to the business of Religion; we cannot but conclude that the Whole is too little, for so important a Work. What a mighty Encouragement did *Joshua* give to the Host of *Israel*, when he told them, *Within three Days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the Land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it!*

But how much greater Encouragement have we, since after a few fleeting Years spent in this Vale of Sorrow, we are assur'd we shall enter into the Heavenly Canaan, into eternal Rest, and uninterrupted Peace! Shall we not then *be strong and of a good Courage* in discharging our Duty? and shall we not answer our Saviour, as the Sons of *Reuben* did *Joshua*, *All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go?* If we are allways ready to do our Duty, we shall

Secondly, Stand upon our Guard against the Devices of our Adversary. And in this again our Duty resembles that of the Soldier, whose business it is, to keep up a watchfull Guard continually upon Duty, and prepared to receive the first Alarm, and give the ear-

liest

liest
And
at th
even
lurki
unfut
be lu
rity.
negle
rally
disore
and c
unexp
An
requir
in his
given
is cap
Duty,
tend i
dread
Confo
the m
if we
it to
fail to
full In
State.
fence u
Witness
This o
slumber
Serm

lieft Notice of the Approaches of the Enemy. And this prudent Custom is observ'd, not only at the immediate Expectation of Danger, but even at a remote distance from it; that no lurking Spie, or disguis'd Adversary may pass unsuspected, and that the Army may never be lull'd into too much Confidence and Security. And if this Duty of Watchfullness is neglected, the fatal Consequences of it generally shew the Folly of the Neglect, and the disorder'd Troops overcome with Pleasure, and oppress'd with Sleep, are destroy'd with unexpected Slaughter.

And our Condition like theirs, absolutely requires timely Care and Caution; and God in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, has given us proper Faculties for it. Our Reason is capable of discerning the Excellence of our Duty, and the Advantages that certainly attend it, and the Heinousness of Sin, and the dreadful Effects that flow from it; and our Conscience has the quickest sense of Evil, and the most tender Regard to our Interest; and if we maintain it in its full force, and suffer it to Exercise its due Authority, it will not fail to Admonish us friendly, and give us faithful Intelligence of the Circumstances of our State. This under God *is our Keeper, our Defence upon our Right hand*, and like that other *Witness that is in Heaven*, it will not sleep; Job 16. 19. This our Guardian *that keepeth us, will neither slumber nor sleep*, unless we weaken it by repeated
Serm. VII. I

The Duties of our

peated Injuries, and are resolv'd to cover it with the grossest Darknes.

The Subtlety of the Tempter renders all our Vigilance necessary; he is too well acquainted with the weakness of our Nature, and knows the easy Passes, by which he may soonest gain access to the Heart; and he is never regardless of the proper Season, when we are most likely to be wrought upon; but suits his Artifices to our Temper, and gratifies our prevailing Inclinations. And we have a Party within, prone to second his Endeavours, and dispose us to a Compliance with him; and when our Thoughts are wrapt up in imaginary Peace, and presumptuous Security; or wandering abroad, and gone from their appointed Post, our treacherous Affections open the Gates and let in a multitude of Adversaries; and we cannot too strictly enquire, to whom we give Admission. For our Vices impose upon us by the most specious Pretences, and Evil recommends it self to us by the fair Appearance of Good. Our Breast is croud-ed with Enemies, while we imagine that none but Friends have enter'd in, and it is entirely in Flames, before we perceive that a Spark is kindled. Our Passions that betray'd us, are let loose upon us, to distract and torment us, and our Bosom becomes a strong hold against us: we must therefore keep our Thoughts intent upon our important Work, and daily consider the deceitfullness and pernicious Nature of Sin; we must fix our Minds upon it, and

and p
lution
what
watch
broken
we to
tainly
Hour
Bur
addic
ger;
Provi
finess
your
and to
just R
are en
Enem
perhap
mer fl
is fresh
a seco
yet th
Thoug
our sel
fore, a
on to
Am
unhapp
hardly
than t
of it.
Innoce

and prove and try the strength of our Resolutions. *If the Good Man of the House had known* Luk. 12. 39. *what Hour the Thief would come, he would have watch'd, and not have suffer'd his House to be broken through.* How much more then ought we to watch, since we know that he will certainly come, but are entirely ignorant of the Hour of his Coming!

But alas, we are void of Care, and as much addicted to Pleasure, as if there were no Danger; and when it overtakes us, our whole Provision is then to be made, our whole Business then to be done. But while we endeavour to rally our scatter'd Forces together, and to recollect our impartial Thoughts, and just Resolutions in the time of Confusion, we are entirely Conquer'd, and fall a Prey to the Enemy whom we disdain'd to fear; and tho' perhaps we condemn our selves for our former slackness, and while the sense of the Evil is fresh in our Minds, we resolve to prevent a second Surprize, by our Care and Forecast; yet this Impression is soon worn away, these Thoughts are soon cool'd again; we unbend our selves, and grow as remiss as we were before, and the same steps of Liberty train us on to Destruction.

Amongst the number of Sinners, that are unhappily seduc'd from their Duty, there are hardly any that can offer a better Excuse, than this Childish one, They did not think of it. All that they can say of the loss of their Innocence, is no more than the corrupted

Mat. 28. 13. Soldiers said of the Body of Jesus, *They came by Night and stole it away while we slept.*

That we may not be for ever deluded, we must prepare our selves for the artfull Devices that will be form'd against us, and the sudden Assaults that will be made upon us. And since we are liable to them every moment, we must live as if every moment were the critical Point, the article of Danger; and if the accursed Spirit should allways find us ready to resist him, he would desist from his fruitless Endeavours; for *if we resist him he will flee from us.* And

James 4. 7.

Thirdly, We must live in the daily Exercise and Practice of Virtue, that *the Lord when he cometh may find us so doing.* And in this also the Military Discipline is a proper Pattern for our Imitation; for the raw unexperienc'd Soldier, is constantly exercised, and fitted for the Day of Battle; and has the several Parts of his Duty render'd familiar to him by frequent repetition; and when he has acquir'd the Art of War, he preserves the Remembrance of it by continual Use and Trial; and when he is call'd upon to engage with the Adversary, he receives the Charge, as if he were accustom'd to Fight, and has no occasion to say as *David* did of the Weapons and Armour of *Saul*, *I cannot go with these, for I have not prov'd them.*

2 Sam. 17.
39.

And to render us successfull in the Performance of our Duty, the same Exercise is necessary, and our Virtue will languish and decline,

cline,

cline,
Pract
that
suppl
Flam
foun
to g
made
But t
ed w
and t
burni
they
them
Oyl sh
Bu
supin
shinin
milke
unfit
prese
the S
Course
discer
Spots
perfo
and c
which
An
Virtu
back
clines
vices
olue

cline, unless we renew its force by diligent Practice. *The wise Virgins* took Oyl with them, Mat. 25. that their Lamps might never want a fresh supply, but might allways burn with a lively Flame; and when *the Bridegroom came*, he v. 7. found them *trimming their Lamps*, and ready to go forth to meet him, *when the Cry was* v. 6. *made at Midnight, Behold the Bridegroom cometh.* But too great a part of Mankind are contented with embracing the Christian Profession, and take no farther care to keep their Lamps burning after they are once lighted; as if they had applied the Prophecy of *Elijah* to themselves, and imagin'd that *their cruse of Oyl should never fail.* 1 Kings 17. 14.

But alas! if we suffer our selves to grow supine and careless in our Duty, our most shining Virtues will contract Rust and Blemishes, and the less they are us'd, the more unfit they will grow for use. They must be preserv'd in Motion like that glorious Body the Sun, which *rejoyceth as a Giant to run his Course*; and tho' he seems sometimes to a discerning Eye, to have a few Marks and Spots upon him, yet he throws them off by performing his daily Circuit, and burnishes and clears himself from the grosser Matter which he may have contracted. Psal. 19. 5.

And unless we go forward in the Paths of Virtue, it is too much to be fear'd we shall go back; for the same idle disposition which inclines us to stay, will lay us open to the Devices of our Adversary. And indeed the Mind

that is truly possess'd with the love of Virtue, will not be willing to stop; for there are such charms in Goodness, as will almost constrain it to proceed, if it has once obtain'd a just Opinion of them; and the nearer we draw
 Phil. 3. 14. towards *the Prize of our High Calling*, so much
 Heb. 12. 1. the more eager we shall be *in running the Race that is set before us*: methinks there seems to be an irresistible force in those delightfull
 Luk. 12. 43. words, *Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

Surely a reasonable Creature that has any regard to his own Honour and Interest, any thoughts of Happiness, must earnestly desire to be found by his Saviour doing those things which he commanded him to do; and which recommend him, to the Approbation of himself, of the Holy Angels, and even of God, through the Merits of Christ. And such Questions as these must naturally arise in the Soul; Am I in such a State as is agreeable to the gracious Will of my Creatour and Redeemer? And should I chuse in my present Condition to be summon'd to appear before my Judge? Yet I fear, we can seldom return a satisfactory Answer to such Questions as these.

And in the common Circumstances of our Life, we are so far from being prepared for our great Charge, that we are hardly fit to leave our Temporal Affairs with decency, much less to launch forth into Eternity; and were it only uncertain what our Portion would be in the Future State, one might conclude

clud
 Prot
 H
 ever
 the v
 take
 struc
 eatin
 a gre
 four
 Youn
 all o
 upon
 when
 Temp
 the G
 Iron,
 Con
 when
 Lord
 the F
 unto
 Dunc
 and
 falls
 and a
 An
 Duty
 never
 factio
 the t
 Pleas
 Life.

clude it very difficult to bear the doubtfull Prospect.

How then can we rest, as we very often do, even under a certainty of being expos'd to the worst of Misery? Were Judgment to overtake us, it would find us, as unexpected Destruction did the Children of Job, *who were eating and drinking Wine, when behold there came a great Wind from the Wilderness, and smote the four Corners of the House, and it fell upon the Young men.* Or rather it would surprize us with all our Sins about us, as the Hand-writing upon the Wall did the impious *Belsazzar*, when he was *drinking out of the Vessels of the Temple, the Spoils of Sacrilege, and praising the Gods of Gold, and of Silver, of Brass, and of Iron, of Wood, and of Stone.* What Horrour and Confusion must seize the mighty *Pharaoh*, when there was a great cry at Midnight, that the Lord had smote all the First born in Egypt, from the First born of Pharaoh that sate on his Throne, unto the First born of the Captive that was in the Dungeon! But how much greater Horrour and Confusion must fill the guilty Soul, that falls asleep in the midst of sinfull Pleasures, and awakes in endless Torments!

And how Happy is the Man that makes his Duty his first Care, and effectually resolves never to leave it undone! Besides the Satisfaction that flows from his Innocence, he has the truest Enjoyments, even of the ordinary Pleasures which God has allow'd him in this Life. He has no ill-boding Fears to strike a Damp

Damp upon him, but a joyfull Assurance that he has made the necessary Provision for the Life to come. And whatsoever complacency he takes in the good things that Providence has pour'd out upon him, it puts him in mind of those that are infinitely better.

Whereas the Man that has neglected the *one thing needfull*, is often interrupted in his belov'd Pleasures, with the unwelcome Apprehensions of future Torments; and notwithstanding his pretended Confidence, he cannot but be doubtfull of himself; and after all his

Psal. 52. 7. Endeavours to *strengthen himself in his Wickedness*, his Vices will correct him, and his Iniquity will find him out.

But on the other hand, he that is provided for Eternall Life, is also secur'd against the Evil Day, and all the Calamities of the present World. For he is supported with a well grounded Peace and Assurance; he knows that he shall either conquer them by his prudent Endeavours, or if they should destroy his frail Body, he has certain hopes of an

2 Cor. 4. 17. abundant Recompence, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, for his light Affliction which is but for a moment.*

Thus the Soldier that not only discharges the Duties of his Calling, but is constantly mindfull of a nobler Warfare, and lives as if he were to die every Day, goes forth with Chearfullness to meet the Enemy in Battle. He is pleas'd a little with the hopes of Victory, and the Fame and Glory that attend a

Triumph.

Triumph. But he looks up with joy to the Reward of a greater Conquest, a Crown of a more weighty and enduring Substance, than any that the World can yeild him. And if it should be his Lot to die in the Field, he is perswaded that he shall then overcome his last Enemy, and the Trumpet shall no more call him forth to the hazards of an uncertain Fight, but to receive the everlasting Fruits of an ever-glorious Victory. And when *the time of his Departure is at hand*, he says with the Apostle, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that Day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love his Appearing.* ^{2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8.}

Let us therefore *endure hardness as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ; and let us not entangle ourselves with the Affairs of this Life, that we may please him who has chosen us to be Soldiers.* Since our Christian Course is also compar'd to a Race, *let us so run for the Prize, that we may obtain.* And since our future Happiness is represented as a Marriage Feast, let us take care to put on *the Wedding Garment, and let our Loyns be girded about, and our Lights burning, and we our selves like Men that wait for their Lord.* ^{2 Tim. 2. 3, 4. 1 Cor. 9. 24. Mat. 22.}

The

S

bca

A

Ble

32

— 2 —

ed t

z

7

i

6

7

2



12



5

50

The certainty of a General Resurrection.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD,
At St MARY'S, on EASTER Monday.

I Peter I. 3, 4.
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a Lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, To an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.

THESE are the Expressions of St Peter's Gratitude for the means of our Salvation, and the Divine Compassion, in raising us from the depth
Serm. VIII. of

The certainty of a

of Despair to a delightful expectation of Immortal Happiness, and in giving the fullest Confirmation to the Promises of Life, by
 Heb. 13. 20. *bringing Jesus Christ again from the Dead.*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a Lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us. This manifested his own sense of God's Mercy, and was also enough to enflame the Hearts of others, that his Exhortations to a good Life might make the deeper impression upon them.

The words relate to the whole Mystery of our Redemption, and to that Spiritual change which is wrought in us here, in order to our being renew'd to a better Life hereafter. But they may be understood chiefly with respect to that great Article of our Faith, the Resurrection of our Saviour. And they lead me to consider it;

First, As it strengthens and confirms our Faith in general.

Secondly, And more particularly, as it is a sure Earnest of our own Resurrection. And

Thirdly, As it gives us a *Lively Hope of an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us.* And

First,

General Resurrection.

141

First, As it strengthens and confirms our Faith in general. Our Holy Faith is founded on the glorious Resurrection of our Saviour; the truth and certainty of which are an undeniable Testimony of the Doctrines of the Gospel, and give us a satisfactory Assurance, that the Preacher of it came from God. Upon the performance of this mighty Work, all our Hopes depended, and had he fail'd in this, Religion would have lost all its force and efficacy. But its Great Author has now asserted its Truth to the conviction of every one, but those abandon'd Fools, that are obstinately resolv'd never to be convinc'd. And by fulfilling this, He has abundantly prov'd, that whatever He Promises, he is able to Perform. And we may expect the Reward of our Duty with unshaken Confidence, since our Lord and Master has so publickly, in so wonderfull a manner obtain'd it.

Whilst the Body of Jesus was yet in the Grave, and Death seem'd to prevail entirely over the Deliverer of the Nations, they that had put their Confidence in Him, but yet had not Faith enough to depend on his Rising again, were held in an anxious suspense, and were almost ready to *Sorrow as Men without Hope*. But as soon as he had open'd the Prison Doors, and they were convinc'd that it was impossible that *Death* should any longer have Dominion over Him; their expectation reviv'd with Him, and they could not but acknowledge with an ecstasy of gladness (as the most

Rom. 6. 9.

most diffident of the Disciples was at last constrained to do) that he was *their Lord and their God.*

I may justly suppose that you have been so true to your selves, as to search the Holy Scriptures, which will entirely satisfy you of *the Reason of the Hope that is in you*; and that you have also heard from this place, what sure grounds there are for believing, that Christ is certainly risen.

The many Types and Predictions that had respect to his Resurrection, and the Punctual manner in which they were answer'd and fulfill'd; The several Appearances of our Lord, and his familiar Conversation with his Disciples; The infallible Tokens of his being really Alive; and his condescending to shew that *he was not a Spirit*; The repeated experience of those with whom *He went up and down* after He was Risen; and their Incredulity and Caution, which rendred them incapable of being Deceiv'd, joyn'd with their Simplicity and Integrity, which render'd them unlikely to Deceive; the Time and Place in which they Proclaim'd his Resurrection, their plain and unaffected Narration, and the Effect which it had on their most prejudic'd Adversaries; the discouraging Prospect which was before them, whilst on the other hand there was no Worldly Temptation to allure them; *the cruel Mockings and Scourgings*, the severe *Trials of Tortures and Death* which they patiently underwent; and their fix'd Resolution to speak the Truth

of

of Go
their
and I
Priest
which
the se
cessar
barely
renew
Minds
with a
things
And
it bec
every
manif
himse
his ris
gaged
was th
that h
ingly
our Fa
Affe
Grave
gether
that D
three D
Risen,
dence
at his
Where

General Resurrection.

143

of God; their Concord and Unanimity, and their zealous adhering to their departed God; and lastly, the impotent attempts of the Priests and Elders, and their foolish Reports which contradicted themselves, and turn'd to the service of Christianity; all these must necessarily occur to your Thoughts, or at least barely to mention them, must awaken and renew the Remembrance of them in your Minds, And I may use the words of St Paul with a very little variation, *Do you believe these things? I know that you believe them.* Acts 26. 27.

And since the Resurrection is thus attested, it becomes the main Pillar of our Faith. For every Miracle that Jesus wrought, serv'd to manifest that he came from God; but he himself seem'd to lay the greatest stress upon his rising from the Dead. His Truth was engaged for it; and this unquestionable Miracle was the strongest Ratification of every thing that he had done and taught. And accordingly St Paul declares, that *if Christ be not rais'd, our Faith is vain, we are yet in our Sins.* 1 Cor. 15. 17.

As soon as the Body of Jesus was laid in the Grave, the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir we remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet Alive, after three Days I will Rise again. And had he not Risen, they might then with a better Confidence have call'd him Deceiver, and mock'd at his Disciples with this taunting Question, *Where is the Promise of his coming?* Mat. 27. 62, 63. 2 Pet. 3. 4.

And

1 Cor. 13.
1, 2.

And though they had display'd all the Beauties of Truth, and the Excellence and Usefulness of the Gospel; though they had boasted of the Miracles, which had given Life, Health, and Liberty to a multitude of Diseas'd in the midst of their Streets; Nay *tho' they themselves had spoken with the Tongues of Angels, tho' they had the Gift of Prophecy, and understood all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' they had all Faith so that they could remove Mountains*; yet there had been an invincible Objection against them, and this had still return'd upon them to silence their Preaching, that he in whom they trusted, was yet held Captive by Death, notwithstanding his glorious Promises of Triumphant over it.

They that derided his Prediction, even before the time fix'd for its accomplishment, and *reviled him* whilst he hung upon the Cross, saying, *Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three Days, save thy self, if thou be the Son of God come down from the Cross*; they would not have fail'd to embrace the Advantage that was put into their Power, but would have urg'd it with all the spite and scorn of an enrag'd Pharisee, had God *left his Soul in Hell, and suffer'd his Holy One to see Corruption*. And whensoever the People had been inclin'd to receive the Gospel, *the Stone that was roll'd to the Door of the Sepulcher* would have still remain'd, *a Stone of stumbling, and Rock of Offence*.

But since the reverse of this has happen'd, and the Authour of Nature has exceeded all its Powers, in *loosing the Bands of Death*, we

may

may
which
preva
ny of
vail o

Th
to be
(say t
and m
more
from
again
as it v
of wh
not f
Man
mean

Bu
and
Power
there
entire
ledge
Autho
that c
ness a
of Jer
For h
would
it is c
do it;
would
ration
Serv

General Resurrection.

145

may rejoyce in God, and hold fast our Faith, which has stood the Test of many Ages, and prevail'd over the stubborn Prejudices of many of the Jews, and (we trust) will always prevail over the vain Cavils of Infidelity.

The Jews were obliged by their own Words to believe in Jesus, *if he be the King of Israel* Mat. 27. 42. (say they) *let him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe him.* And since he has done more than they desired, in rescuing himself from the Grave, their own Mouth will witness against them. The Resurrection of Jesus was as it were the Condition, on the Performance of which we ought to believe, and if this will not satisfy us, we require more than the *Rich Man did for his Brethren*, as the most effectual Luk. 16. 27. means of Conviction.

But if we once admit that there is a God; and that to raise the Dead is above the Power of Nature, we must either deny that there has been any Resurrection, or yeild an entire Assent to the Gospel, if we acknowledge that Christ is Risen; if we question the Authority of his Doctrine, we must disallow that of his Person, or reflect on God's Goodness and Veracity, since he asserted the Cause of Jesus, and *made bare his Arm* in his behalf. For had Jesus deliver'd any Falsehood, God would not have given Testimony to him. Nay it is contrary to his Nature, and he could not do it; and it is impious to suppose that he would set his Seal to a Delusion; and it is irrational as well as impious, to imagin that

Serm. VIII. K God,

God, who has the most tender regard to his Creatures, and who has sent down his Spirit to lead us into all Truth, should thus confirm a Lie, and bring us under a necessity of believing it. God forbid that any one should entertain such an Imagination, or abuse those Means which were afforded to us, as a confirmation of our Faith, in general, and more particularly, as an earnest of our own Resurrection, which is,

Secondly, To be consider'd. The Death and Resurrection of Christ are Emblems of our Death unto Sin, and new Birth unto Righteousness.

Rom. 6. 4, 5. *We are buried with him by Baptism unto Death, that like as Christ was rais'd up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life. For if we have been planted, together in the likeness of his Death, we shall also be in the likeness of his Resurrection, which is a certain Pledge of our rising again from the Place of Corruption, to a second and better*

Rom. 8. 11. *Life. For if the Spirit of him that rais'd up Jesus from the Dead, dwell in us, he that rais'd up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken our Mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us. For since*
 1 Cor. 15. *Christ is risen from the Dead, he is become the First*
 20, 21. *fruits of them that slept; for since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the*
 Col. 3. 4 *Dead: and therefore when Christ who is our Life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in Glory.*

General Resurrection.

147

By that Almighty Power, by which *he made the Worlds, and upholds them in Being, by which the Blind receiv'd sight, the Lame walk'd, the Lepers were cleans'd, the Deaf heard, and the Dead were rais'd; by which he nail'd our Sins to the Cross, Triumph'd over the King of Terrours, and Conquer'd all the Legions of the Prince of Darkness,* he will also Rescue all our Captive Bodies from the Power of the Grave, and *swallow up Death in Victory.* Mat. 11. 5.
1 Cor. 15.
54.

When *all these things are to be dissolv'd,* and this World is to pass away, the Authour of Nature will summon the Dead to appear before him, and all the Generations of Men will return to Life.

He will command the four Winds to restore our scatter'd Ashes, which they have driven over the face of the Earth, *and the Winds and Storms will fulfill his Word.* Psalm. 148. 8.

He that said to the raging Sea, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud Waves be stayed,* shall require the vast Ocean to *give up* all those that made their Bed in its Waters. Job 38. 12.

He will *enter into the springs of the Sea, and walk in the search of the Depth: and the Gates of Death shall be open'd to him* in those Channels which no Line could fathom. v. 16, 17.

The Earth shall cast up the Bodies that were buried in its spacious Bosom, which are more in Number than the Starry Host of Heaven, and the Sands of the Shore. And he that counts the smallest Insects, and the

Seeds of every Plant, will not suffer one of these Bodies to be lost. For the Eye of his Providence will pierce thro' the secret hiding Places of the Earth, and follow us into the *Chambers of the Grave.*

When we are *pass'd away like a Shadow*, and the remembrance of us seems to be no more, he will not be forgetfull of us, but will still have Compassion on the Work of his own Hands.

Ecc. 1. 3. He who has found out the height of Heaven, and the breadth of the Earth and the Deep, who has numbred the Sands of the Sea, and the drops of Rain, and the Hairs of our Head, will preserve the minutest parts of our frail Bodies, that he may raise them to a more glorious Building, and they may all return to a beautiful Order, *when he says, Come again ye Children of Men.* For he distinctly knows all the secret Springs of our broken Frame, and remembers the Dust whereof we were made.

And after he has suffer'd us to be the Prey of Corruption, he will deliver us with Power and great Glory, and get himself Honour upon the common Enemy, and all his host of Diseases. He will say to the Prisoners go forth, and to them that are in Darkness, shew your selves.

Isa. 49. 9. And they shall awake and put on their Strength, and their beautiful Garments. The Captives of the Mighty shall be taken away, and the Prey of the Terrible shall be deliver'd; for that, the Lord is strong in Power, not one faileth.

Isa. 52. 1.

Isa. 49. 25.

Isa. 40. 26.

Let

General Resurrection.

149

Let not this be thought impossible, for *have you not known? have you not heard, that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creatour of the ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his Understanding.* And if we wait upon the Lord, he will renew our Strength; *v. 31.* we shall mount up with wings as Eagles, we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.

Our great Deliverer has shewn that it is possible to rise again, and made the way plain before us. For as in his Sufferings he put himself in the stead of all Mankind, so in his Resurrection, he represents us all. *But every Man shall rise in his own Order, Christ the first fruits, afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming.* *1 Cor. 15. 23.*

And now if Christ be preach'd that he rose from the Dead, how say some among us, that there is no Resurrection of the Dead? The Resurrection of the former supposes, that of the latter; and he that denies the latter, does by Consequence deny the former; *for if there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then is Christ not Risen.* *v. 13.* Yea (says St Paul) and we are found false Witnesses of God, because we have Testified of God that he rais'd up Christ, whom he rais'd not up, if so be the Dead rise not. *v. 15.*

But had not God already display'd his Power, in restoring Life to the Crucified Jesus, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* *Acts 26. 8.* Had he only promis'd to do this mighty Work, that had been a sufficient warrant for our Belief, and it would be presumptuous in us to doubt

the possibility of it, and with-hold our Assent, because we cannot exactly account for the manner of doing it, or remove every Difficulty which our vain Imagination has rais'd.

Were our Faith entire and consistent with it self; and did we thoroughly consider what we pretend to believe, namely that God is a Being of all Perfection, we should not think it too much for him. Do we not acknowledge an Almighty God, the maker of Heaven and Earth? Do we not every Day declare that he
 Psal. 95. 3. *is a great God, and a great King above all Gods,*
 4. 5. *that in his Hands are all the Corners of the Earth,*
and the strength of the Hills is his also; that the
Sea is his, and he made it, and his Hands pre-
par'd the dry Land? and do we after this doubt whether he can rebuild our Houses of Clay, and *breath into us the breath of Life,* after it has
 Eccl. 12. 7. *return'd to him that gave it?*

When we behold indeed the Conquests of
 Psal. 141. 7. *Death, and see the multitude of Bones that*
are scatter'd before the Pit, like as when one break-
eth and heweth Wood upon the Earth, we are inclin'd to put the Question of God to the Pro-
 Ezek. 37. 3. *phet, Can these Bones live?* But if we consider,
 Job 10. 11. *that it was he that cloth'd us with Skin and*
Flesh, and fenced us with Bones and Sinews, we
 Ezek. 37. 6. *shall readily believe that he can again lay Si-*
news upon us, and bring up Flesh upon us, and co-
ver us with Skin, and put Breath into us that we
may live again.

We must either affirm that there is no Knowledge or Power more extensive than
 our

our o
 possibl
 And
 of N
 to Li
 dible
 and r
 and
 a mo
 by w
 and l
 but l
 allow
 well
 A
 bable
 we b
 certa
 this
 can
 sown
 A
 bein
 this
 Wif
 and
 and
 ther
 ther
 the
 anor
 Foo
 rish

General Resurrection.

151

our own, or confess that there are many *things possible with God, which are impossible with Men.* Luk. 18. 27.

And for us to believe that we were made out of Nothing by the Power of God, and yet to Limit the same Power, and think it incredible, that it should collect our dispers'd Ashes, and restore the wonderfull Order of our Bones and Sinews, or that it should frame them in a more perfect Manner, and make the Bands by which they are held together, more firm and lasting; this can be resolv'd into nothing but Prejudice, which will not permit us to allow that the one is agreeable to Reason as well as the other.

And indeed we trust to a thing as improbable in the ordinary Affairs of Life; when we bury the Seed in the Ground, we do it in certain hope of a plentiful Harvest; and yet this must first return to Corruption, before it can spring up and flourish, *and that which is sown is not quickned except it die.* 1 Cor. 15. 36.

As to the usual Objection of our Bodies being digested into different parts of Matter, this will effectually answer it, that the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God can observe and trace them through their several Changes, and his Power can bring back every Part of them to their proper place. And though there may be Barbarous Countries in which the Flesh of one Man becomes the Food of another, yet God can so order this unnatural Food that it may never be turn'd into Nourishment, that it may pass off with the Burden

den that Nature daily rejects, and every Man may be oblig'd before his Death to give up that Flesh which once belong'd to another.

1 Cor. 15.
37.

How are the Dead rais'd up, or with what Body do they come, is no longer a puzzling Question, if

Prov. 15. 3.

we consider that *the Eyes of the Lord are in every place,* to observe *the number of his Armies in Heaven and Earth,* and that his Providence looks down upon all the Works of the Creation, and continually beholds the Seeds and first Principles of every thing. It descends into the private retirements of the Grave, and

Isa. 26. 20.

though we *enter into these our Chambers,* and the *Doors are shut about us,* yet the Lord will find

Mat. 24. 31.

us out when he comes *to gather his Elect together,* and *to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth*

Isa. 26. 21.

Pl. 139. 15.

16.

for their Iniquity. For he that *possess'd our Reins and cover'd us in our Mother's Womb;* he from whom our Substance was not hid when we were made in Secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the Earth; he can discover us in the distant Countries, and secret hiding Places into which we are scatter'd, and see us as perfectly, as he does the Holy Angels that stand before him in Heaven. For not one of his Creatures is lost, though they cannot be perceiv'd by us; and he has a distinct View of them, though they are blended and mix'd with each other.

And therefore when he sends forth his Ministering Spirits, he will bring all the Dead to life; they will be *naked and open to his All-seeing Eye;* and when the Trumpet calls to
Judg-

Judgm
fore his
And ho
may ex
we may
of it;
the Gra
they tha
Life, an
surrectio
is enoug
ing with
dings of
to us, a

Thira
ritance i
not away
that ma
entertain
Contem
King of
our Sav
Sufferin
rected;
ness of
Heaven
ably to
shall rise
with him
Were
than thi
fire to a

General Resurrection.

153

Judgment, *they will stand up upon their Feet before his Judgment Seat, an exceeding great Army.* ^{Ezek. 37. 10.}
And how much soever this wonderfull Change may exceed our Conceptions of things, yet *we may comfort our selves* with the expectation of it; for since Christ is Risen, *all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and come forth, they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* ^{John 5. 28, 29.} *The Resurrection of Life* is enough to fill every one *that loves his appearing* with exceeding great Joy; and the Tidings of our Lord's Resurrection are welcome to us, as, ^{2 Tim. 4. 8.}

Thirdly, It gives us a lively hope of an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us. It is this that makes it a truly delightfull Subject, and entertains the Good Man with a pleasing Contemplation at the near approaches of *the King of Terrours.* For it was the Design of our Saviour, and the End to which his Life, Sufferings, and Glorious Conquest were directed; and when he had overcome the sharpness of Death, he open'd the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers: and we hope, agreeably to the Tenour of the Gospel, that we shall rise from the Dead, that we may *Reign with him in Glory.* ^{2 Tim. 2. 12.}

Were we not to rise to a more perfect State than this present Life, we should scarcely desire to awake out of the Sleep of Death, or return

Job 3. 17, 18. return from the Land of Oblivion, where the Wicked cease from troubling, and where the Weary are at rest, where the Prisoners rest together, and they hear not the Voice of the Oppressour. For in the midst of Life we are in Death, and our Frailties and Diseases open to us a various Scene of Misery. And were we to pass a second time through this Vale of Sorrow, each of us might complain with Job, *Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Misery, and Life to the bitter in Soul?* Were this our case we should long for Death, but have this to torment us, *that it cometh not;* and should dig for it more than for hid treasures; yea we should have reason to rejoyce exceedingly, and be glad could we find the Grave.

But thanks be to God we are begotten to a lively hope of an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.

It is Incorruptible, as it is directly opposite to our uncertain Condition in this short and wretched Life: for our Body is compounded of such Principles, as have a natural tendency to Corruption, and its Parts are worn away by a necessary Decay. Our tender and delicate Frame is liable to be broken by every Accident and Disorder; unless all the Passages by which Life is convey'd are kept free and open, the Fountain is presently stopp'd; or if the Silver Cords are loos'd, or strain'd too far, the Dust returns to the Earth as it was; and our Complaint of the shortness of our Time,

Eccles. 12. 6, 7.

Time, ought to be chang'd into Wonder and Astonishment, at our being upheld so long in Being. But the same God that made us so frail, and plac'd the time of our Dissolution, at so little a distance from the Day of our Birth, has given us his Promise, that when we Rise again, we shall Die no more. Our Inheritance will be in it self incorruptible, and we shall also be built for an equal Duration; incapable of knowing Sorrow, Diseases, or Pain; and endued with such strong and lasting Faculties, as will be fill'd with the most exquisite Pleasures, and never overpower'd by the most perfect Enjoyment.

Our Inheritance will be undefiled, as it will be contrary to the sinfull Corruptions of our Nature, and entirely free from a prevailing inclination to do Evil. If we are thought worthy to obtain the Resurrection unto Life, we shall no longer be disquieted by our unruly Passions, be tempted no more by sinfull Objects, but enjoy the Approbation of our pure and unfullied Reason, delight in the most perfect Obedience, and be ever endeavouring to please a God of Infinite Holiness. And our Happiness will be yet Infinitely greater, because it *fadeth not away*: it is the utmost consummation of our Pleasure to know that it will be Eternal, and our Bliss is therefore without Allay, because we are sure it will never have an end.

The things of this World which raise our Expectation, not only fade away in the use
of

of them, but as soon as we come near to touch them. They are fairest to behold, when they are distant from us, and lose all their Charms, when we think they are just ready to answer our Expectation.

But the Joys of Heaven increase in the Possession; they will never leave us empty, or unsatisfy'd; our Minds will receive fresh Satisfaction, and be still secure of an Eternity of Bliss.

And this Inheritance is *reserved in Heaven for us*; the Place which God fills with the Influences of his Blessed Presence; where each of his Saints is possess'd of all things really desireable, which flow for evermore from God's Infinite Fullness; where we shall live in the Society of the Holy Angels, and in sincere and constant Friendship with Spirits, of the most kind and amicable Disposition, that know no Jealousy, no Anger, no Envy; where we shall sit down with our Redeemer, and tell forth the great things that he hath done for us, and sing Praises and Hallelujahs in a gratefull Remembrance of his Love in dying for us, and getting the Victory over Death by his glorious Resurrection.

Therefore *Blessed, for ever Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath Begotten us again unto a Lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.*

The

[157]

*The Promise of a Comforter Con-
sider'd.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at
Magdalene-Coll.

I N
O X F O R D,
On W H I T-S U N D A Y.

St John XIV. 16.

*And I will pray the Father and He
shall give you another Comforter,
that He may abide with you for
ever.*

WHEN our Saviour's Departure
was nigh at hand, He began to
prepare the Minds of his Di-
sciples for their approaching
Trial, and to Alleviate their Affliction, at the
Serm. IX. seem-

The Promise of a Comforter

seeming Loss of their best Friend, with promises of Comfort, and support, equal to the sharpest Conflicts.

Having assur'd them that He would grant whatsoever they should ask in his Name, for their own real Advantage and the propagation of his Gospel; and having done enough to deserve the most ardent Love, and engage all their Affections, He requires one distinguishing Proof of their Sincerity; *If ye Love me keep my Commandments.*

Joh. 14. 15.

To reward their Endeavours, and to enable them to perform yet more and more, He adds, *And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

John 16. 7.

It was *expedient* for them that He himself should go away, for if I go not away (says He) *the Comforter will not come unto you.* According to the Order of God's Dispensations, it was requisite that He should first ascend into the Heavens, and then the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity, should come down to make a lasting Abode with them. And our Saviour speaks as if the Holy Ghost, would not only supply his Place, but render his Presence of most Advantage to them.

He knew the frailty of their Nature, the concern they must lie under, when they were *scatter'd abroad, as Sheep without a Shepherd*, and the great Work He had design'd them for, and the Difficulties they must encounter in the Discharge of it; and therefore

He

He promises to apply Himself to his Father, agreeably to the Office He had undertaken, and to Pray for them, that He would send down his Holy Spirit, who was Qualified to succeed the Messiah in his Ministry here on Earth, as He was equally *God Blessed for ever*, and who would perfect the Work, which in his Infinite Wisdom He was pleas'd to leave unfinish'd; for He tells them, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth shall come, He will guide you into all Truth.* And to render his Presence more than an Equivalent for that of their Saviour in the Flesh, he was to *abide with them for ever.* John 16.
12, 13.

The Word which is render'd Comforter, signifies also an Advocate, and Exhorter, in all which Capacities the Holy Spirit was promis'd to the Apostles, and in them to all the World. In considering the extent of this Promise, I shall have a regard to each of these Senses.

First, As He was an Advocate, an Exhorter, and a Comforter to the Apostles.

Secondly, To the Christians of all Ages; which will bring me,

Thirdly, To shew in what Respects He was to abide with them for ever. And

First, He was an Advocate, an Exhorter, and a Comforter to the Apostles. The Christian Religion, tho' fully Ratified by the Resurrection

urrection of Jesus Christ, did not recommend it self to the World, till the Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, were shed on the Preachers of it. And considering the Prejudices of Mankind, which are hardly to be pierc'd thro' by the brightest Evidence; considering the Sacred Authority of the Jewish Religion, the pretended Antiquity of the Heathenish Superstitions; the prevailing Power of Sin, and the establish'd Dominion of Satan: it could not be expected, that the Gospel should be easily receiv'd, which requir'd an utter Enmity with Sin; which discover'd the Folly of the Heathen Sages, and the gross Errors of their Idolatry; and which boasted of more Perfection than the Law of *Moses*.

And had there been none of these Objections against it, had the Gospel it self been agreeable to the blind Zeal, the vain Opinions, and the suppos'd Interest of Men; yet the Persons chosen to publish it, had been thought to cast a slur upon it; and a few Illiterate Fisher-men, could not have gain'd an entrance into the Palaces of Princes, and a favourable hearing from the Pride of Courts. They could not have perswaded the Masters of *Israel* to learn Instruction, or wrought the Admir'd Oracles of the Gentiles, into an Opinion, that even they could Teach them Wisdom.

But when the Truth it self was unacceptable, and the Persons appointed to Preach it, could only lessen it, in the Eyes of a vain-
glorious

glori
sistan
noth
of M
was e

As
succe
natur
They
when
appe
Perfo

W
Passio
tende
could
they
of sp
Lord
Warr
Scor
firm

An
be h
they
the n
the g
dom
fore
rest
Infir
Man
rify a
Se

glorious World; nothing but the Divine Assistance could sufficiently recommend them: nothing but the working of God on the Minds of Men could reconcile them, to the way *which* Acts 28.22. *was every where spoken against.*

As it was unlikely, that the Apostles should succeed in their Endeavours, barely by their natural Strength, and weak Capacities; so They would scarcely have attempted any thing when it was a work of Toil and Danger, and appear'd very Difficult, if not Impossible to Perform.

We must suppose them subject to the same Passions with other Men, to have the same tender apprehensions of Evils; and as they could not rush upon them without fear, so they were not ignorant of the Consequences of speaking in the Name of Jesus. For their Lord and Master had given them a dreadful Warning, and a lively representation, of that Scorn, Malice, and Cruelty, which they should firmly expect, and certainly undergo.

And their sense of these Calamities must be heightned, by the pleasing mistake, that they had long entertain'd, in common with the rest of the Jews, that they should enjoy the greatest Happiness in the temporal Kingdom of the Messiah. Their Condition therefore requir'd, that *the Spirit of God* Ista. 11. 2. *should rest upon them;* and in compassion to their Infirmities, and for the general Good of Mankind, his Sacred Fire descended to purify and enlighten their Minds, to kindle no-

bler Thoughts, and better Conceptions of Things.

And such was its Effect, that they were not ashamed to maintain the Cause of the Crucified Jesus, and glory in being the Disciples of a suppos'd Malefactor. Animated by a Divine Principle, and fill'd with Spiritual Life, they despis'd Tortures and Death, and the impotent Contempt and scornfull Boasting of the Professors of Worldly Wisdom. Being assur'd, that they had a faithfull Advocate to Plead for them, they neglected the usual Preparations, and ordinary Methods of Defence, and yet durst to engage with the chief of their Adversaries, that were train'd up in the Arts of fallacious Reasoning, and Qualified to ensnare the Innocent. They depended on God's Assistance, in the needfull time, in the Article of Danger; for their Saviour engag'd himself to support them. *When they bring you unto the Synagogues and unto Magistrates, and Powers, take ye no Thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same Hour, what ye ought to say.* Thus they went into the midst of Great Multitudes; and tho' there were Numbers to overpower, and Clamour to silence, tho' there was Wit to Deride, Artifices to Baffle, and Threatnings to Discourage them, yet they spoke the Truth of God, answer'd the Objections, rejected the Scoffings, and wip'd off the Calumnies of their Accusers.

Luke 12.
11, 12.

And

And as this their Advocate enabled them to speak in the behalf of a persecuted Religion, and endued them with such measures of Strength, that tho' *the Heathen rag'd, and the People imagin'd a vain Thing*; tho' *the Kings of the Earth stood up, and the Rulers were gather'd together, against the Lord, and against his Christ, yet they broke their Bonds in sunder, and cast away their Cords from them*; so he turn'd the Hearts of Men in favour of them, and made their Enemies be at Peace with them. By his secret Operations he chang'd the Bent and Disposition, even of the Perverse and Stubborn Jew, reconcil'd the Teachers of Philosophy to the Doctrines of the Cross, which they once call'd *Foolishness*, and gain'd many Profelytes to a Pure and Holy Religion, in the Courts of Heathen Emperours, and out of the nearest Kindred of Cruel, and unrelenting Tyrants.

Even they that *denied the Holy One, and Kill'd the Prince of Life*, were of the Multitude of them that were afterwards joyn'd to the Disciples.

Whilst the Chief Priests, and Elders took Counsel to slay them, Gamaliel a Pharisee, a Doctor of Law, that was had in Reputation among the People, allayed the Fury that was kindled against them, by perswading his Brethren, to beware, lest they should Fight against God.

The Keeper of the Prison came and fell down before Paul and Silas his Prisoners, and

wash'd their Stripes which perhaps he himself had given them.

And the Ministers of Torture were softned into Pity, at the point of Execution, and would become Partakers of their Sufferings, rather than inflict them on the Disciples of Jesus.

Through the same Blessed Spirit, the Successors of the Apostles were first admitted into the Presence of the Emperors, and then offer'd such Apologies to them as suspended the hottest Persecutions, and almost prevail'd with them to repeal the Edicts publish'd against the Christians.

Such was the Force and mighty Influence of these Apologies, that *they Subdued Kingdoms, stopp'd the Mouths of Lyons, quench'd the violence of Fire, and took away the edge of the Sword.*

Heb. 11.33,
34.

A Second Office of the Holy Spirit, was to stand by the Apostles, and exhort them to pass chearfully through this Vale of Sorrow, and go on in the Discharge of their Duty, when the Terrors of a Thousand Deaths were set in array against them. Such is the frailty of our Nature, that it seem'd to want a Support, even when Almighty God had taken it upon Him.

Mat. 26.53.

He that could have commanded *Legions of Angels* to Fight for him, was pleas'd to permit one of that glorious Order to attend him, in his Agonies in the Garden; and to shew, that as Man, he was mov'd at the sight of
that

that
appea
streng
him
fail,
Aids
A
grea
the
And
on a
fible
the
T
they
them
were
Temp
W
not r
Teac
to t
rath
Opp
Exh
tion
T
der
turn
read
Phil
and

that *Bitter Cup* which was mixt for him, *there* Luk. 22. 43.
appear'd an Angel unto him from Heaven,
strengthening him. And the Disciples that *forsook* Mat. 26. 56.
him and fled, were infinitely more liable to
 fail, were in a more pressing want of such
 Aids, as would be sufficient for them.

And their Master powr'd out his Grace in
 great Abundance upon them, and consider'd
 the Difficulties attending their high Calling.
 And as often as they were requir'd to appear
 on an extraordinary Occasion, they were sen-
 sible of the immediate Presence, and receiv'd
 the Dictates of the Holy Ghost.

They were releas'd out of Prison, that
 they might Preach before those that had cast
 them into it, and by a Message from Heaven,
 were Commission'd to go, *stand and speak in the* Acts 5. 20.
Temple, to the People, all the words of this Life.

When the Question was put to them, *Did*
not we straitly command you, that you should not v. 28.
Teach in this Name? They answer'd, pursuant
 to the Divine Command, *We ought to Obey God* v. 29.
rather than Men. He presented unto them
 Opportunities of Publishing the Gospel, and
 Exhorted them to offer the Means of Salva-
 tion to such as would accept of them.

Thus when *an Eunuch of great Authority un-* Acts 8. 27,
der Candace the Queen of the Ethiopians was re- 28, 29.
turning from Jerusalem, sitting in his Chariot, and
reading Isaias the Prophet, the Spirit said unto
Philip, Go near, and joyn thy self to this Chariot:
 and such was the Success of his Preaching,

Acts 8. 37. that the Eunuch declar'd, that *he believ'd that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.*

Acts 10. Thus also in the Case of *Cornelius* the *Centurion*, by the Direction of the same Spirit, several Circumstances concurr'd to prepare him for his Conversion, and to dispose *St Peter* to bring *the glad Tidings of Salvation* to him and his Household. The Gentiles were inclin'd to seek him, and he was perswaded to comply with their Request.

Acts 18. 9. When *St Paul* by the guidance of the Spirit, departed to *Corinth*, the Lord spake unto him by Night in a Vision: *Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy Peace, for I am with thee, and no Man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much People in this City.*

Acts 20. 22, 23, 24. And when he had born his Name among the Gentiles, he tells his Followers, *I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me; But none of these things move me, neither count I my Life dear to my self, so that I might finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry which I have receiv'd of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.* It was the Spirit that gave him this view of his Sufferings, and enabled him to stand stedfast and unmoveable; which brings me to consider him,

Thirdly, as a Comforter: and in this Respect the Disciples impatiently expected him, in their private Character, as they were touch'd with the same Sorrows as o-
ther

ther Men are at the Departure of their Friend.

It was a severe Trial to see their great Deliverer in whom they trusted, with whom they went up and down, and familiarly convers'd; *nail'd to a Cross*, and *numbred with the Transgressours*. They could not willingly let go their Hopes; and their Hearts must sink within them, when they were forc'd to bury them in the Grave with their Saviour. And tho' his Resurrection rais'd up their drooping Souls, yet his short continuance on Earth, would rather have enhans'd than alleviated their Affliction, had they been left comfortless for ever, and abandon'd and expos'd to the cruel Mockeries of an Insulting World.

But he would *not leave them comfortless*, but promis'd to *give them such Peace as the World* Joh. 14. 27. *could not give*, and to fill them with unspeakable Consolation.

And for this they were waiting with one accord, in Prayer and Supplication, when on a sudden *they were fill'd with the Holy Ghost*; and Acts 1. 14. Acts 2. 4. his Comforts not only *wip'd away all Tears* Rev. 7. 17. *from their Eyes*, and drew a Veil over their past Sorrows, but maintain'd a chearfull compos'd Temper, and a fix'd Resolution, amidst the sharpest Pangs and most exquisite Tortures. When they were *beaten* for glorying in the Name of Jesus, *they departed from the Presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name*. Acts 5. 41. Nay, tho' the Prison Doors were open'd, they refus'd

Act 16.39. fus'd to accept of their Liberty, and they that imprison'd them, *came and besought them, and brought them out, and desir'd them to depart out of the City.*

These Spiritual Comforts plac'd them above the Power of their Enemies, defeated their Cruelty, and upbraided them with Weakness. Had they privily escap'd, or been rescu'd by violence, they that hated them, had not known the measure of their own Power, and therefore had suppos'd it greater than it was; they had flatter'd themselves with a vain Imagination, and been swoln with the thought of what they intended. But since they put it in Execution, stretch'd out their Power to its utmost length, and did the worst that ingenious Malice, and artfull Cruelty could invent; and yet all this was too little to deprive them of their Peace and Satisfaction; since they saw them smiling upon the face of Death, enjoying their Punishment, and breathing out their Souls in Praise and Thanksgiving; this must mortify their Pride, and be an ungratefull Disappointment to them.

And all this was owing to that Blessed Spirit that was their Advocate to Plead for them, their Monitor to Exhort them, and their faithfull Friend to Comfort them.

These kind Offices he perform'd in behalf of the Apostles: and tho' their Case was Extraordinary, yet the same gracious Spirit considers our common Necessities; for,

Se-

Secondly, The Benefits of his Intercession, his Exhortations, and his Comforts are promis'd to the Christians of all Ages. And

1st, He is our Advocate; as he teaches us to Pray, and then makes our Requests known to God; we are foolish and ignorant before him, and tho' we are hardly sensible of any thing in our selves, but Wants and Necessities, yet we cannot represent our Condition, or offer up such Petitions as become wretched indigent Creatures.

We understand so little of the things that are before us, that it is dangerous to trust our own Desires, and we should be far more Miserable than we are, were we not under the Care of a wise and good Being, that distinguishes between what is really fit for us, and what we importunately crave, that withholds the Curses we imprudently call down upon our selves, and blesses us with frequent Denials.

What an unspeakable Advantage is this, that God directs our Applications to him, before he receives them! Infinite condescension! He frames our Prayers that he may accept of them, and teaches us to ask for such things as he can vouchsafe to grant, and such as are best for us to receive!

These are stupendous Instances of Mercy; that the First Person in the Trinity should hearken to us sinfull Creatures; that the Second should present our Petitions at the Throne

Throne of Grace, with the Incense of his own perfect Obedience, and intreat for the Acceptance of them, as a Reward of his Sufferings; and that the Third should joyn with our Spirit, second and inforce our Desires,

Rom. 8. 26. *with groanings which cannot be utter'd*, put himself in our Place, and beg for our Relief, more Earnestly, more Importunately, than the Wretch that is ready to perish, does for an Alms!

2dly, To qualify us for the Blessings of Heaven, he exhorts us to do our Duty. He abides with us for ever, if we do not constrain him to give us up to our Folly. And he continually follows us with perswasives to a good Life. Every Religious Thought, every honest Intention proceeds from him; he waits for a proper Season of speaking to us, meets

Prov. 1. 21. *us in the openings of the Gates*, and at every Turning; lays such trains of Occurrences, as are most likely to allure us to do our Duty, recommends the happy Opportunity of saving our Souls, and endeavours to prepare our Minds that we may act in the fortunate Juncture, in such a manner as will be for our lasting Advantage. How often does he whisper

Gen. 42. 18. *to us, This do and live!* With what care does he sow the Seed of God's Word in our Hearts!

How constantly does he water the tender Plant! How does he labour to season our Minds with Virtue! Don't we often find our selves struck with some affecting Truth? and are

are m
When
or a b
ly Re
teous
it is t
Minis
their
us to
Conc
leads
An
thing
lastin
with
suppl
after
Agree
for h
Temp
them
then
us w
Men
whole
curre
ther
Virtu
Henc
their
fition
great
sciou

are not we pleas'd to see the Impression? When we are inflam'd with a Pious Sermon, or a beautifull Description of Religion, a lively Representation of the Rewards of Righteousness, or the Torments of the Damn'd; it is the Holy Spirit that speaks to us by his Ministers, that gives the Truths of Religion their full force and Efficacy, that beseeches us to be Happy, and with an Affectionate Concern, perswades us to avoid the way that leads to Misery.

And 3dly, That we may not want any thing that is requisite to bring us to the everlasting Enjoyment of himself, he supports us with his Comforts; and these he abundantly supplies us with in the Time of Trial, and after we have strove to gain the Conquest. Agreeably to the Condition we were design'd for here below, he permits us to fall into Temptations. But to prevent our yeilding to them, he is allways ready to help us, and then most especially reaches out himself to us when our Case most requires it; and if Men do not presume too far, or leave their whole Business to him, without the least Concurrence on their part; he will certainly either remove the Temptation, or render their Virtue more Glorious in Triumphing over it. Hence it is that they sometimes maintain their Ground against the most violent Opposition, and perceive that they are endued with greater Strength, than they were ever conscious of before. As the Evils of this World
come

Job 30. 14. come fast upon them, *like a wide breaking in of Waters*, their Resolutions are more and more confirm'd; and their Almighty Comforter bids them stand up undaunted, in the midst of those Sufferings, at the Expectation of which, Nature trembled, and the Succours of Reason were ready to forsake them, and fly away. Hence it is that they have preserv'd their Innocence, tho' almost every thing else that was dear to them, came in competition with it, and have receiv'd the most astonishing Tidings of ill Fortune, with an easy Indifference, a generous Contempt and a noble Bravery.

Phil. 4. 7. And after the Temptation has attack'd them in vain, and they look back with Pleasure on the Conflict, then it is, that *the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, fills their Hearts and Minds*. Under his Shadow they enjoy a delightfull Calm; their Conscience gives its unerring Approbation, and the Spirit witnesses with it; and from their Joynt Testimony they derive a firm Assurance of Inheriting an Eternity of Bliss. And that we may not think this an ill grounded Perswasion, and that the Apostles only had reason to expect such a Comforter; I am,

Thirdly, To shew in what Respects he was to abide with them for Ever. The Persons to whom this Promise was made, are to be consider'd in three Capacities, as the Disciples of our Lord, as the Pastors of his Church, and

as the Representatives of all his Followers, in the succeeding Ages of Christianity.

As they were the Disciples of Jesus, he was to abide with them during their Life, which short and uncertain space is here term'd for Ever; and this, in opposition to the small Number of Years in which their Saviour had continued with them. He did not manifest himself to them, till he thought it expedient to enter on the Publick Discharge of his Ministry, and after he had perform'd his mighty Works amongst them, he was cut off *for the Transgressions of his People*; and tho' he again appear'd to them, it was only to stay forty Days, to display the Glory of his Resurrection, to promise them *another Comforter, that should abide with them for ever*; and then in the Presence of them all, to ascend Triumphantly into Heaven, that he might *give this best of Gifts unto Men*.

That they might *not sorrow as Men without hope*, or be depriv'd of the Enjoyment of this Heavenly Guest, by fearing the loss of so great a Blessing, he was to make himself their constant Companion, and to *preserve* Pl. 121. 8. *their going out and their coming in, from that time forth for evermore*.

As they were Pastors of Christ's Flock, all that should succeed them in that Sacred Office, were with them entitled to the Benefits of this last Promise of their Saviour. The Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, were indeed peculiar to the first Ages of Christianity, and

Mat. 28. 20.

and continued no longer than they were necessary for the Propagation of the Faith; but his Assistance was promis'd to all that were set apart to Minister in Holy things, their Authority is ratified by him: he seconds their Endeavours, and gives Success to their Preaching; and by this gracious Influence, our Saviour is still present with us, and if we watch over the People committed to our Charge, *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us, Lo, he is with us all ways even to the end of the World.*

But there is an infinite Treasure of Graces and Blessings, which are not confin'd to any Age, or to any Order of Men; and these were promis'd to the Apostles, as they represented the whole Body of Christians. Every one that asks of God in the Name of our only Mediatour, shall certainly receive the Graces of his Spirit. Sincere and fervent Prayer is the only Condition of obtaining them; and tho' we are of our selves weak, helpless Creatures, yet if we come rightly qualified to implore the Divine Favour, we may engage Omnipotence in our Defence, and as far as our Condition requires, God's Power will become our own. To encourage our Dependance upon him, he has adopted us for his Sons; and from the Natural Affection which Parents bear towards their Offspring, he teaches us to conclude, that he will do much more for us, than the most tender Father will do for his Children: *If*

ye

ye being Evil know how to give good Gifts to your Children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? We may therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, for we shall obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need. Luk. 11. 13. Heb. 4. 16.

And tho' we live at a distance from the time of our Saviour's appearing in the Flesh, yet we have *another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, that will abide with us for ever.*

But let us remember the Conditions that will qualify us for his Presence; and prepare a Place for him in our Hearts: Let us cleanse our Thoughts, and keep our Intentions pure and unspotted, that our Prayers may be such as he will approve, such as he will condescend to make known to the Father, and Enforce with his powerfull Intercessions.

Let us hearken to his kind Exhortations, and consider, how inexcusable, how ungrateful, how unnaturall it is, to disobey his repeated Admonitions, when it is for our sakes he speaks to us, when it can be no Addition to his own Happiness, when the Motives he uses to prevail upon us, are the strongest Obligations to the Practice of Virtue, or Dissuaves from Vice, Eternal Happiness, or Endless Misery.

Let us endeavour to answer his important Designs in coming down to abide with us. Let us *not grieve his Holy Spirit*, who indears himself to us by the Name of Comforter, and who is pleas'd to represent himself as rejoicing Eph. 4. 30.

ing with our Conscience, and glorying in our Conquest over Sin.

Let us not have this to aggravate our Torments, that we refus'd to be intreated by God himself, when he vouchsaf'd to be our Companion, our Familiar Friend, that he might save us.

Let us not choose the Society of accursed Spirits, when the Holy Ghost has woo'd and besought us, to receive him, and offer'd to abide with us here on Earth, that we might abide with him for ever in Heaven. Amen.



*The Authority and Duty of the
Civil Magistrate.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY
OF

O X F O R D,

At the ASSIZES

Holden there by the Honourable

Mr Baron PRICE,

AND

Mr Baron BANASTER.

Deuter. I. 17.

For the Judgment is God's.

IN these Words *Moses* enforces that solemn Charge which he gave to the Judges of *Israel*. He repeats it in this Chapter, to procure a just Veneration for their

Serm. X.

M

sacred

sacred Character, and to put them also in mind of preserving their own Dignity, and raise them above the power of Fear, of Prejudice, and of Interest.

v. 13, 16, 17. When he relates the wonderfull Instances of God's Goodness to his People, and the Methods which he himself had us'd, in Governing them under God's, their Supreme Ruler and Guide, he tells them, I commanded you to *take Wise Men, and Understanding, and Known among your Tribes*, that I might make them Rulers over you. And I charg'd your Judges at that time, saying, *Hear the Causes between your Brethren, and Judge Righteously between every Man, and his Brother, and the Stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect Persons in Judgment, but ye shall hear the Small as well as the Great, you shall not be afraid of the Face of Man: for the Judgment is God's.*

Job 27. 5. 6. This was a forcible Reason for the faithfull Execution of their high Trust, and a sure Defence against the Evils that might Assault, the Affections that might Betray, or the Overtures that might incline them to *Let go their Integrity.*

Prov. 8. 15. *The Judgment is God's*, as the Persons by whom it is given derive their Authority from Him, who is the Fountain of Power; *by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice.* And it is His, as they Judge in his Cause, and Assert the Honour of him that *loveth Righteousness.*

Psal. 11. 7.

facied

M

To

To make a visible Distinction between Good and Evil, to Subdue the Sons of Violence, to Detect the Villain, to Punish the Guilty, to Vindicate the Innocent, to Relieve the Oppressed, to Protect the Fatherless, and the Widow; These are the Works of God, in which he delights to be employ'd; These make up that Important Business which he has committed to his Judges; and in These, My Lords, I am persuaded, you continually aspire to a Resemblance of Him.

When you consider that *the Judgment is God's*, you cannot but act with a strict Regard to Him, *who without respect of Persons* 1 Pet. i. 17. *Judgeth according to every Mans Work*: you cannot refuse to *hear the Small as well as the Great*, since you Represent that Glorious Being *before whom all the Nations are as Nothing*. And Isa. 40. 17. you cannot *be afraid of the Fate of Man*, since you are supported by Him *to whom Vengeance* Psal. 94. 1. *belongs*.

It concerns us all to consider whose Authority you have, that we may revere your Just Decrees. And it concerns you to remember whose Ministers you are, that you may above all things seek His Honour and Glory. I shall therefore shew,

First, What Regard is due to the Persons that Judge for God: And,
Secondly, What Obligations are laid upon Them. And,

The Authority and Duty

First, What Regard is due to the Persons that Judge for God. There is such a wide Distance between Almighty God, and us, frail, sinfull Creatures, that the mention of Him must strike us with Awe and Reverence. and those that bear a Relation to Him, and are cloth'd with the beams of his Majesty, must necessarily bespeak our Esteem.

The Places of His especial Presence have been separated from Common use, on the account of that perfect Being that fills them: and we are commanded *not to Swear by Heaven* because *it is His Throne*, nor by the Earth because *it is His Footstool*, nor by Jerusalem because *it is the City of the great King*.

And certainly those Persons whom He has Entrusted with a part of His Authority, are to be treated with a tender Regard, suitable to the Dignity of their Commission. And the nearer they are to Him, *who has all Rule, and all Authority, and Power*, so much the more they ought to be had in Honour. And they that Minister *true Judgment to the People*, are under God's immediate Vice-gerents, the nearest to *the Sun of Righteousness*.

And give me leave to say (what I am sure must be the Opinion of you all) that in these Kingdoms, they receive an Advantage, by having their Power convey'd to them by our Gracious Sovereign: since the Example of her Justice and Mercy, is the most lively Representation of the *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, that can be made in this Imperfect State,

State, and effectually recommends the discharge of their Duty to them; as the words of the Law could not but engage the Attention of the Children of *Israel*, and be imprinted on their Hearts, when *Moses* came directly from the Presence of God, and *his Face* Ex. 34. 30. *shone* with the Glory of the Lord.

And the Nature of their Office requires a more than ordinary Veneration, since it renders them like to God, in his most awefull Character, as He is the great Judge of the World.

Till He is pleas'd to summon all the Families of the Earth, to appear before his dread Tribunal, He appoints these His Deputies, to preserve the publick Peace, to vindicate His Providence, and in some measure, to make up the seeming Inequality of his Dealings.

The Business which they undertake is worthy of God, and manifests the Dignity of their Office. And when they *come to execute* Jude 14, 15. *Judgment upon those that are Ungodly*, they cannot but bring to our minds that *terrible Day*, in which the Throne will be set, and the Books Rev. 20. 11, 12. *open'd*: And it presently occurs to our thoughts, that these are Men *that fear God*, Ex. 18. 21, 22. *Men of Truth, hating Covetousness*, and that therefore they are *plac'd over us to Judge the People*, and to pronounce that Sentence, which will be ratified before the Assembly of the Nations, *for the Judgment is Gods.*

And were we to consider this only with Respect to God, whose Image they bear, we should have a sufficient Reason to pay a Deference to them. But we are also oblig'd to it, as we value our present Happiness. For notwithstanding the essential difference between Vice and Virtue, there are many too apt to conclude, that *as is the Good, so is the Sinner, and he that Swareth, as he that feareth an Oath.* And unless we preserve a just Notion of the sacred Authority, that is vested in the Ministers of Judgment, they will scarcely be *a Terrour to evil Doers,* they will

Eccl. 9. 2. *bear the Sword in vain.*

Rom. 13. 4.

And then Violence will cancell all the measures of Right and Wrong, and the greatest Strength will become the best Title to Possession. And the subtle Hypocrite will evade the strongest Obligations, and sport with the ties of Human Laws; as we have learn'd by sad Experience, that no Expedients can secure our excellent Constitution, against the Treacherous Artifices of those Men, who have cast off the Bands of Religion, and yet pretend to an extraordinary Tendernefs of Conscience.

To defend us against the Assaults of the open Oppressour, and the crafty Wiliness of the more cautious, secret Villain, we should give the Laws their full Force and Efficacy, by asserting their Divine Authority, and *rendering Fear to whom Fear is due, Honour to whom Honour.*

Rom. 13. 7.

And

And for the sake of those that are in Public Stations, for the sake of the common Good, and for the sake of every thing that we Enjoy, we should endeavour to suppress those pernicious Principles, which are industriously spread abroad, to the Dishonour of God, and to the Prejudice of our most Holy Religion; which are propagated with a design of blotting out even the Name of Religion, and are levell'd against the Being of a God; which treat Him without the least shew of Decency, and turn to Ridicule that Infinite Spirit, by whom the ungratefull Authors of these Impious Opinions were taken out of the Dust of the Earth, even that Glorious God whom the Holy Angels Adore, and before whom *the Devils Tremble*.

Jam. 2. 19.

The Presumption of these abandon'd Wretches, is certainly an *Iniquity to be punished by the Judges*: For besides its other destructive Consequences, it weakens their Power, subverts the Thrones of Princes, and dissolves all Obligations. And it is requisite that Judgment should be *speedily executed upon them*, that one, at least, of their beloved Objections may be remov'd, and that they may no longer say with a Profane Contempt of God, *Where is the Promise of his Coming?*

Job 31. 11.

2 Pet. 3. 4.

And as we tender the Honour of those that sit in the Seat of Judgment, and desire to reap the Benefits of their impartial Administration, we should also discourage the attempts of those Men, that labour to remove the

The Authority and Duty

the old Foundations, and ascribe the difference between Good and Evil, to a prevailing Custom, and arbitrary Will. Should their wild Opinions be receiv'd in the World, Justice and Fidelity, would be held only by the precarious Tenure of present Interest; and those Righteous Laws which are agreeable to Reason, and interwoven with the Nature of Man, would be bent, and turn'd every way, and forc'd to serve every Occasion. And that *solemn Judgment*, which *is had in Reverence* because it *is God's*, would be lightly esteem'd, as the uncertain Caprice and Humour of Men.

And I must mention one Opinion more, which is Injurious to All in Authority, which violates their Character, and exposes them to the Outrage of an unruly Multitude; namely, That which places all Power in the People, and makes the greatest of Princes accountable to their Subjects.

The Advocates for this Principle, contend for it as earnestly, as if it were the Charter of Mankind, that they may bring us into their admir'd Confusions, and carry us back to their imaginary state of Nature.

But since there is nothing to support this vain Tenet, except the hardy Confidence with which it is deliver'd; I hope you will ascribe all Power to the God of Peace and Order, and shew your Regard to Him, in the Persons whom He has chosen to Represent Him.

And

And your Example in this respect, cannot but have a happy Influence, for where God's Judges are duly esteem'd, *the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.* They will be afraid to incur the Displeasure of Persons whom God has so highly exalted; and will *stand in Awe and Sin not.*

Isa. 26. 9.

Psal. 4. 4.

Those whom no other Arguments can convince, will be wrought on, by the Glory that is shed upon them: and they that are ready to conclude that God is afar off, will not be altogether unmindful of Him, when they see that His Power is lodg'd in Ministers here on Earth, that are at hand to Avenge his Cause.

The Offender that has broken the lesser branches of the Law, will be stop'd by the seasonable check that is given to him. And the condemn'd Criminal, will receive his Punishment, as an earnest of more dreadful Torments; and the Sentence of an Earthly Judge that extends only to his meaner part, the Body, will make him sincerely desirous of Reconciling himself to God, that He may not *destroy both Soul and Body in Hell.*

Mat. 10. 28.

Having seen what Regard is due to the Persons that Judge for God; Let me (with Submission) shew,

Secondly, What Obligations are laid upon Them. And while I shew what you ought to Do, I shall, I presume, repeat what you have Done: and it cannot be ungratefull to you, to have these Obligations set before you, if you have
allways

allways taken Pleasure in acting up to them. You will go along with me, thro' the parts of your Duty with unspeakable satisfaction, and with that *Peace* of Mind, which Integrity gives a Man in every hour of his Life, which it gives him most especially *at the last*.

And each of you will with Rejoycing, say,
 Job 16. 19. *Behold my Witness is in Heaven, and my Record*
 Job 29. 12, 14, 16. *is on high. I deliver'd the Poor that cried, and the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. I put on Righteousness and it cloth'd me, my Judgment was as a Robe, and a Diadem. I was a Father unto the Poor, and the Cause that I knew not, I searched out.*

You can never want a sufficient Motive to incline you to Practise these glorious Duties, if you consider whose Character it is that is stamp'd upon you. As it distinguishes you in the Eye of the World, and makes you superior to your Brethren; so if it is thoroughly consider'd, it will give a becoming Dignity to your Actions, and raise you to a generous Contempt of every thing that is Base and Dishonourable.

No sordid Hopes of Advantage, no enslaving Fears, no fond Partiality, no foolish Pity, can sway or pervert the Man, that is constantly mindfull of his near Relation to God. All these are trampled under his Feet: and he looks stedfastly on his main Business, and resolves that no Accident shall over-rule his first purpose of promoting the Cause of God.

We

We have a noble Instance of this greatness of Soul in the *Beloved Daniel*; he pursued one important End, and went on in an even Course of Integrity, amidst the various Revolutions of Government, and the different Administrations of several Princes. He kept himself free from the dissimulation of Courts; and his Virtue was neither tainted by the Favour of the Great, nor blasted by their Displeasure.

And when the Envy of *the Presidents and the Princes* was kindled against him, because *he was Faithfull, neither was there any Error or Fault found in him*; when they resolv'd to find Occasion against him concerning the Law of his God, because they could find no other; and therefore artfully procur'd a Decree, that whosoever should ask a Petition of any God or Man for thirty Days, but of the King alone, should be cast into a Den of Lions; when they had surpriz'd *Darius* into an imprudent Consent, and brought the Faithfull *Daniel*, into a necessity, either of appearing Disloyal and Ungrateful, or of stooping to Idolatry; this wrought no change in him; but when he knew that the Writing was sign'd, he went into his House, and his Windows being open in his Chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneel'd upon his knees three times a Day, and Pray'd and gave Thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Dan. 6.

Thus he fell into the hands of his Enemies, and the impious Edict was not to be repeal'd. But his Integrity had gain'd the Heart of the King,

King, and he was exceeding sorry for the words that had gone out of his Lips; and waited with impatience till *the Living God* had deliver'd his Servant *Daniel*.

This excellent Example, this brave undaunted Spirit, must naturally recommend itself to you. And if you remember that you Act for God, you will be equally Courageous, in doing Justice and Judgment.

For as you are put in His stead, you will be asham'd to do any thing that is disagreeable to Him. A true sense of the Majesty of God, will fill you with just and impartial Thoughts, and be an incentive to Glorious Actions. For the Remembrance of God, will have the same effect upon you in giving Judgment, as an habitual regard to the Authority of Reason, has in the general Conduct of Human Life.

Did Men consider what Privileges are conferr'd on them by their Creatour, and Respect that observing Witness and Judge, that has a Tribunal within their own Breasts, they would scorn to descend from the Dignity of their Nature, and would always strive to live as it becomes Reasonable Creatures. And in like manner, there can be no failure in the Discharge of your Duty, unless you forget whose Representatives you are. If this is always fresh in your Minds, you will certainly Acknowledge those indispensable Obligations that attend your Commission; and it cannot
but

0
but be
the Per
The
Man de
you ret
suppor
ment,
Conter
Whe
that is
thing t
terelte
that kn
of the
to give
with,
Tha
such a
look u
hold I
Judge
outwar
of Gre
solemn
will be
and D
be lost
Distin
It n
Princip
ceedin
growt
and In

but be your study, to imitate your Lord in the Perfections of Justice and Mercy.

The Command of St Paul to Titus; *Let no Man despise thee*, is also applicable to you. If you retain a just Value for your selves, and support your Character by a suitable Deportment, you cannot be obnoxious to the just Contempt of others.

When you take care to avoid every thing that is beneath your exalted Station, every thing that is unworthy of God; your disinterested Conduct will win the Esteem of all that know you, and extort the Praises even of the Vicious and Profane, and compell them to give Testimony to your impartial Sentence, with, Certainly This Judgment is God's!

That it may be such as He will approve, such as will do Honour to Him, you should look up to God with a lively Faith, and behold Him *coming in the Clouds of Heaven* to Judge the World: and be as regardless of all outward appearances, and the dazzling marks of Greatness, as if you were engag'd in that solemn Trial to which all Nations and People will be call'd, at the Last Day, when *Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers*, will be lost in the common Mass, and all Worldly Distinctions will be no more.

It must be your constant Purpose, and the Principle that directs, and animates your Proceedings, to put a stop to the prevailing growth, and the daring insolence of Vice, and Impiety, to answer the cries of Blood, to pluck

pluck the ill-gotten Gain out of the Jaws of the Oppressour, to clear the Innocent from the artfull Calumnies, and guard him against the subtle Insinuations of the false Accuser.

And we have abundant Reason to Pray for all in Authority, that God would pour his *Excellent Spirit* upon them; for without his Aid, it is impossible to solve the perplex'd and intricate Cases that are brought before you, to distinguish between the reasonable Complaints of the Injur'd, and the Prosecutions that are carried on by the Malicious; to favour the Modesty of Innocence, and assist it in making its necessary Defence, and yet not give an Advantage to the Guilty; to allow the Laws their due Extent, and yet prevent their reaching farther than they ought; to be strictly Just, and yet not rigidly Severe.

Above all things, it is requisite that Justice and Mercy should act consistently with each other; that where it is necessary that the Sword of Justice should be drawn, Mercy should acknowledge the Necessity of it; and where this milder Quality can exert it self, Justice should ratify its Sentence. And when the Ends of Both can be obtain'd, they should joyn in a beautifull Harmony, and imitate that perfect Pattern, which was set forth in our wonderfull Redemption, in which Justice was satisfied in the Punishment of Sin, and Mercy rejoyc'd in the Salvation of the repenting Sinner.

But

But I need not put you in mind of shewing Mercy: I need only desire you to remember that you are Judging your Brethren, and your Humanity will display it self. For our Nature renders us very sensible of the Calamities of one another, and we cannot easily consent to the bringing any Evil upon those of the same Flesh, unless it is in order to a greater Good.

And we may suppose it is partly for this Reason, *that the Father Judgeth no Man, but has committed all Judgment to the Son*, because He took our Nature upon Him, and *was touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities*; and as He is our Brother, and a Man like our selves, will make all the allowances that can be desir'd, to our Weakness, Surprise, and Inadvertency.

And I conclude that you will endeavour to Resemble our Blessed Saviour, our Compassionate Judge; and with his Patience and Forbearance, will hear every thing that the Criminal can offer for himself; and manifest even to him, that you desire nothing more, than to search and examine his Cause, and to Acquit, or Condemn, as that requires.

This will affect him with a sense of his Condition, and open his Eyes to behold his Guilt, when he finds that the Sentence of Death is pass'd upon him, notwithstanding that he was heard with the most favourable Attention, and had every thing that he could plead for himself, weigh'd in the Ballance of Justice,

Justice, and consider'd with all the Tender-
ness that is due to Human Nature.

And as you value the Honour of God, as
you would have Justice rightly Administred,
as you would be carefull to save the Life of
Men, as you would preserve the Publick
Peace, and enjoy your own Possessions, it con-
cerns you to keep up an awefull sense of the
Importance of an Oath. For this is the *best*
Confirmation of all our Rights, the strongest
Heb. 6. 16. tie that can be laid upon us, and the *end of all*
strife.

Except this is held Inviolable, we shall all-
ways stand in the midst of Dangers. Our Ex-
cellent Church will be left open to the evil
Designs of its Adversarys; our Queen, the
Lam. 4. 20. *Breath of our Nostrils*, and the Life of our
Hopes, will be expos'd to the Assaults of un-
reasonable Men, that will break the feeble
Bands of a precarious Allegiance; the Repu-
tation and the Life of every Man, will be
continually liable to suffer, by the base Ar-
tifices of Malice and Hatred, and your For-
tunes will be at the disposal of every one,
that has Confidence enough to Forswear him-
self.

To prevent these dreadfull Mischiefs, you
• will think it necessary to proceed with the
utmost severity against those Witnesses that
swear for Hire, and wait for an Opportunity
of selling their Oaths at the dearest rate:
You will also discover your Displeasure a-
gainst those that play with these Obligations,
and

and t
and
that
make
they
to th
the r
weigh
since
sign.

TH
preva
upon
every
decisi

Up
and t
Judg
yet th
Dete
sider,
Color

To
peal,
pos'd
the L
to yo
Oblig
and t
libera
Opin
Me
you,
Ser

and take pleasure in ridiculing the Simplicity, and confounding the Minds of ignorant Men; that trie to lead them into Absurdities, and make them contradict themselves, that when they are perplex'd and amaz'd, they may Swear to they know not what, and afterwards prove the reverse of it. This is trifling in the most weighty Affair, or rather it is infinitely worse, since it is frequently done with the worst Design.

That these and many other Evils may not prevail; there are several Duties incumbent upon you also, that Assist in searching out every Cause, and preparing Matters for the decisive Judgment.

Upon you, it in a great measure depends; and tho' there is the strictest Fidelity in the Judges (as we must allway suppose there is) yet their Sentence must be influenc'd by your Determination. And therefore you must consider, how you represent the Case, and what Colours you lay upon it.

To you, your Country, and your God Appeal, and such is the Confidence that is repos'd in you, that the Estates, the Liberties, the Lives of your Fellow Subjects, are put into your Hands; and you are bound by all the Obligations in Nature, to weigh the Charge, and the Defence, with the most cautious Deliberation, and to deliver your unprejudic'd Opinion.

Methinks this Confidence that is plac'd in you, should kindle an earnest Desire, of performing

forming those great things that are expected from you. And the supposition that you are Men of Integrity, *in whom there is no Guile*, no blind Affection, no Partiality, must make you Ambitious of deserving that Honourable Opinion that is entertain'd of you.

And since God is pleas'd to refer His Cause to your Judgments, you should deal with as much Equity, and Justice, as if you beheld Him sitting in the midst of you, and condescending to wait for the result of your Consultation.

You must consider also that you Represent those Saints, that *will sit upon Thrones Judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel*, even those Just Men that are now made Perfect, and subject to no Malice, no Hatred, no Envy.

And if you think upon these things, you will set your Face as a Flint, and regard not the Threatnings of Impiety. You will redress the Grievances, and compose the Differences of your Brethren. You will relieve the poor helpless Man, and be *Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé*. There will be a decent Regularity in all your Proceedings; and the final Sentence that is given after your searching Inquiries, will proclaim your Justice and Wisdom; and they that Judge for God will rejoyce to second your Determinations.

And now let me intreat you, my Lords, to consider the most engaging Motives to the Performance of your Duty; or rather, Let me

me open the Springs of your unspeakable Pleasure, if you have perform'd it.

If you have studied to be Mercifull, *as your* Luke 6. 36.
Heavenly Father is Mercifull, and Righteous, as
 He is Righteous, with what joyfull Assurance
 will you call the whole World to Witness, to
 your impartial Conduct! With what Confi-
 dence in God, will you call upon Him, to con-
 firm their Testimony! The People will an-
 swer; *You have not defrauded us, nor oppress'd* 1 Sam. 12. 4.
us, nor taken ought of our Hand. And the Lord
 will Witness for you; Behold these are my
 Faithfull Servants, *Perfect and Upright Men,* Job 1. 8.
such as fear'd God, and eschew'd Evil.

And you will depart hence in Peace, and
 go with an undaunted Boldness, from the
 Earthly Courts of Justice, to a greater Tri-
 bunal. And when all the Generations of Men
 are gather'd together before it, you will find
 your equitable Decrees Recorded in the
 brightest Characters in *the Book of Life.* Rev. 21. 12.

And God who is *the Father of the Father-
 less*, who *Pleadeth the Cause of the Widows*, will Psal. 68. 5.
 kindly accept the Services you have done, for
 these, His Beloved Charge; and make a pub-
 lick Acknowledgment of the grateful Pledges
 of your Love.

Your Virtues will be produc'd before Men
 and Angels, because you *heard the Causes be-
 tween your Brethren.* Your God will graciously
 pass by your Infirmities, because you *Judged
 Righteously between every Man and his Brother,
 and the Stranger that was with him.* He will

196 *The Authority and Duty &c.*

raise you to a high and distinguishing Degree of Honour, because you did not *Respect Persons in Judgment*. You will *sit down* with the Greatest and most Glorious Beings in the *Kingdom of God*, because you *heard the Small as well as the Great*. You will delight to behold the Face of God, because you were *not afraid of the Face of Man*. And you will enjoy Everlasting Happiness, by *a Decree that altereth not, For the Judgment is God's*

Now unto the Great and Glorious God, that shall Judge both the Quick and the Dead, be all Honour and Glory, Now and for Evermore. Amen.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all Evermore. Amen.



The

S

P

St.

Comm
al/
to

T
The
Good,
Serm

[197]

*The Duty and Happiness of Trust-
ing in God.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
PARISH-CHURCH

OF
St. PETER's in the East,
O X F O R D.

Pfalm XXXVII. 5.

*Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust
also in him, and he shall bring it
to pass.*

THE Children of Men have gene-
rally been so unhappily mistaken,
as to pursue Evil, under the ap-
pearance of Good, or to pursue
Good, by means entirely Evil.

Serm. XI.

N 3

In

The Duty and Happiness

In the former case, though they have attain'd to the Object of their Desires, yet they have found nothing but Disappointment. And in the latter, they have wandred, and disquieted themselves, without reaching to their end; and the farther they have gone, still the wider they have been from the Mark.

To prevent these fatal Mistakes, the Psalmist has given us a sure and never-failing direction in the words of the Text. For if we *commit our way unto the Lord*, that is, if we make our Applications to him in all our Undertakings, and choose to act in those ways that are agreeable to his Will; and if we *put our Trust in him*, without any suspicion and diffidence of Success, without any vain opinion of our own Counsels, and without using any indirect means to obtain our end, He will guide us to it by his infinite Power, and give us perfect Satisfaction, through his infinite Goodness.

The Duty enjoyn'd, conduces so plainly to our Interest; and the Reward propos'd, is so necessary a part of our Happiness, that I cannot but hope for your Attention, while I state the Duty, and shew the certainty of the Reward. The Duty consists,

First, In applying to God, as the Authour and Giver of all Success.

Secondly, In proposing a good End, and pursuing it by lawfull means. And

Thirdly,

Thirdly, In putting a firm Confidence in God, for the Success of our Endeavours, without any anxious fear or distrust, without any Presumptuous opinion of our own measures, and without taking any Indirect courses to gratify our Desires. And

First, It consists in applying to God, as the Authour and Giver of all Success. And in this, even the Heathen are an Example to us, who were directed by the Dictates of Nature. Though they were mistaken in the Object and manner of their Worship, yet in This, certainly they were not mistaken, that they Besought the assistance of their Gods, in all their Undertakings, and never presum'd to engage in any Important affair, without endeavouring to obtain their favour.

One of their most celebrated Authours addressing himself to the City of *Rome*, the Seat of Power, and Empire, assures her, that the wide extent of her Dominion was entirely owing to her regard to the Gods; and hence every part of her Happiness was deriv'd, and to this, every Prosperous Event ought to be ascrib'd. And Experience tells us, that his Sentiments were Just.

And if we acknowledge a God, and a Providence, we cannot but think our Affairs in the safest condition, when they are recommended to the watchfull care of so Powerful, and so Wise a Being.

To

The Duty and Happiness

To be regardless of him, implies the most unnatural neglect of our own Interest; and whilst we forget his provident Direction, we not only Despise, but insolently Affront him.

For if God be not with us, he is against us; and if it is the utmost Vanity to think our selves sufficient to act without him, it is certainly the greatest Impiety to act against him.

And this we presume to do, when we rashly engage, without imploring his Blessing upon our future Conduct; we seem to imagine that we are a match for God, and even bid him do his worst, to cross our measures, and blast our proceedings.

It is infinitely better to begin with a Just respect to him. This is a firm and lasting foundation of Happiness; and though the vain Builders of the World refuse it with disdain, yet no Building can stand, unless this
 Ps. 118. 22. *be the Head stone in the corner.*

The series of our Actions can never be broken, if we fasten the first Link of the chain to the Throne of God; for he will order and dispose it, by that mighty Hand, which ranges all the Occurrences of Time in a Beautifull Order, and makes them subservient to his Will.

It will give us a Just confidence, in every Undertaking, if we know that it is under the Guidance and Protection of Him, by whom Nature is directed in its course; from whom
 all

all natural Causes receive their power of acting, and by whom they are enabled to produce their proper Effects.

What Peace! what Joy may a Man speak to himself, when he can boldly say, Go on and Prosper, for the Lord is with thee, and *he will send his Angel* to be thy Companion on the way! Gen. 24. 7.

If we consider what great things he is able to do for us, we can want no other Inducement to move us to make our Applications to him. But yet we may draw a very forcible motive from the consideration of the weakness of our Abilities, when we act without him, and their much greater weakness, when we act against him.

Indeed if we know our selves, we can hardly bear this consideration; for when we meditate upon our Strength, even then, the Object of our Thoughts, is nothing else but Weakness.

For what is the power of one Man, since an innumerable Host of Men, has so often prov'd to be *less than nothing, and vanity!* They have melted away like the Hail-stones, which perish as they fall to the Ground, and do not endure long enough to be numbred.

Though in the Evening they have cover'd the Grass of the Earth, yet before the Morning Light, the mightiest Armies have faded away like the Grass which they cover'd, and have been scatter'd sooner than the early Dew which passes before the Sun.

And

The Duty and Happiness

And if we glory in the wisdom of our Counsels, yet how vain is our Glory! The most artfull Designs are often dash'd and confounded in their first conception, and are seldom permitted to grow to maturity; or if they are not check'd so soon, yet the Mind is at last overcome by the Labour and perplexity of its thoughts; and though its admir'd contrivances *are come to the Birth, it has not strength to bring them forth.* The trains of Policy have been suddenly broken; and tho' the Threed has been curiously wrought, and woven with the exactest skill, yet it has been spun too fine, drawn to too great a length, *and snapt in sunder as a threed of Towe is broken when it toucheth the Fire.*

Isai. 37. 3.

Judg. 16. 9.

The necessity of applying to God, as the Authour and Giver of all success, renders it also necessary,

Secondly, To propose a good End, and pursue it by Lawfull means. For we in vain endeavour to recommend our way to the Divine Protection, unless it be agreeable to the will of God. If it displeases him, it is presumptuous to expect Success, and much more presumptuous to apply to him for it.

He may indeed for his own important Purposes, permit it for a time to prosper; But to hope for Prosperity, as his gift, or to implore his Blessing, while we are engag'd in a sinfull course, implies the most Injurious Notions of his Justice and Wisdom.

Let

Let
Addre
ner :
"with
"thou
"casts
"unsp
"com
"and
"tho
"wilt
"you
"fire
"figh
Su
allow
and y
of no
a Sin
mean
A
End
us.
do I
God
Evil
the
I
wre
pro
Cau
hall
it.

of Trusting in God.

203

Let us suppose the Sinner, to make his Addresses to Heaven in the following manner: "Lord I beseech thee to look down
"with favour upon my present Undertaking,
"though it is utterly offensive to thee, and
"casts the most Impious reflections on thy
"unspotted Holiness. I confess, I cannot ac-
"complish my Design without thy Assistance,
"and am yet more unable to attempt it, if
"thou contendest with me; But I hope thou
"wilt have mercy upon my weakness, and
"vouchsafe to give me the Object of my de-
"sires, though it is an Abomination in thy
"sight.

Such Addresses as these, you will readily allow, are full of Wickedness and Absurdity: and yet our Applications to God, will admit of no better a construction, while we pursue a Sinfull end, and make choice of Unlawfull means.

And whether the Means are Evil, or the End, an heavy weight of Guilt will lay upon us. St Paul has justly condemn'd those who *do Evil that Good may come*. The Greatest Rom. 3. 8. Good can never justify or excuse the Least of Evils; neither is it ever necessary to pursue the latter for the sake of the former.

If our own Cause is depending, we are wretchedly mistaken, if we think it may be promoted by Sin. And if we espouse the Cause of God, this is far from requiring unhallow'd Instruments, to support and preserve it. In such a case as this, the words of the
Son

Eccles 15.
11, 12, 20.

Son of *Sirach* should always be had in remembrance: *Say not thou, it is through the Lord that I fell away, for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou he hath caus'd me to err, for he hath no need of the sinfull Man. He hath commanded no Man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any Man License to Sin.*

And if we do Good that Evil may come, we pervert and misapply it to an execrable purpose; our intention is most exceedingly sinfull, and violates and abuses that which is Good, in the most outrageous manner: it is like *stealing the Vessels out of the Temple of God, and drinking in them to the praise of Idols*; or like taking a Coal from the Altar, to destroy the Habitation of the Most High.

And the Danger is unspeakable which arises from a false perswasion, that God will favour our unrighteous Cause. For if in his Infinite Wisdom, he suffers it for a while to prevail, we flatter our selves with an Opinion, that he approves of our Undertaking. Hence we Blasphemously ascribe our Success to his especial Kindness, and Glory in *calling Evil Good*, because he has not yet executed Vengeance upon us for doing Evil.

And there is no Villany which mistaken Man will not commit, when he imagins that God is on his side, and delights to Bless his wicked Endeavours. He then goes on without restraint, and labours to *fill up the measure* of his Wickedness.

The

The Fatal consequences of this Erroneous Opinion, will (I fear) remain a dreadful Spectacle in this unhappy Nation, *till Time shall come to an end.*

But if we have any regard to our most important Interests, we shall make it our especial care that *our ways may please the Lord*, and He may vouchsafe to look graciously upon them, who *is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, Hab. 1. 13. *and cannot look upon Iniquity.* And having committed them to his watchfull Providence, our Heart will be naturally encourag'd,

Thirdly, To put a firm Confidence in God for the success of our Endeavours, without any anxious fear or distrust, without any Presumptuous opinion of our own measures, and without taking any Indirect courses to gratify our Desires.

A Just confidence in God will not admit of any anxious fear or distrust. Were we left to our selves, indeed, there would be more than sufficient reason for fear and anxiety: for our Power is neither able to procure the Good that we reach after, nor to prevent the Evils that hang over us.

Our Knowledge is very Imperfect, too short to measure the compass of our wants, or to find out the proper means of providing Satisfaction for them. Our Wisdom is puzzled with difficulties that daily arise before us, and often entangles it self, whilst it endeavours to unravel them. And how fast soever
we

we cleave to our selves, it is unsafe to rely even upon the darling Principle of Self-love, or to trust our own Affections.

But we know that in God (if we know any thing of God) there is Power to bestow the greatest Good that we can desire, and to guard against the worst of Evils that we fear; Knowledge that extends to all the wants of his Creatures, and provides a proper supply, from the beginning of Days to the utmost period of Time; and Wisdom that is liable to no approaches of Darkness, but is always a Pure, unchangeable *Fountain of Light*. And we know also that these glorious Perfections are in him, who is Infinite in Goodness, and whose Loving-kindness to Man, is like Himself, *the same, Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever*.

Heb. 13. 2.

How then can we fear, when our Cause is committed to his Protection? should our Adversaries be many, *yet they that are with us, are more than they that be with them*. For the Lord Almighty is our Defender, who is attended by Thousands of Angels *that excell in*

2 Kings 6.
16.

Pf. 103. 20.

Job 38. 35.

strength. They delight to fulfill his Commandment, and hearken to the voice of his words. When he sends them forth, they go, and say unto him, here we are. And as they always do him Service in Heaven, so by his appointment, they succour and defend us on Earth.

Pfal. 29. 3.

Should the Storm and Tempest rage against us, yet we are held fast by him, who *commandeth the Waters, even the Glorious God that maketh the Thunder*. And shall our Hearts be

be troubl
to be at

If we
we seen
God ha
will nev

And
he will
attendi
and cor

as he w

Kingdon

Beho

Jacob's

the fat

comfor

Egypt:

I will a

And

ing hi

Captiv

them,

burning

But

enoug

surely

folly.

when

in ou

W

to Co

Rest,

their

be troubled, when he commands the Waves to be at Peace; and the Waves obey his Will?

If we distract our selves with anxious Cares, we seem to suspect the Divine Veracity; for God has assur'd his Faithfull Servants, that he will *never leave nor forsake them.*

Heb. 13. 5.

And he has given convincing proofs that he will always fulfill his Promise. Behold him attending *Abraham* from his Father's House, and condescending to be *his Shield and Buckler*, *as he went from one Nation to another, from one Kingdom to another People!*

Pl. 105. 13.

Behold him supporting the Infirmities of *Jacob's* Old Age, and encouraging him to bear the fatigue of a tedious Journey, with these comfortable Words, *Fear not to go down into Egypt: I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again!*

Gen. 46. 3.

And Behold one *Like the Son of God* spreading himself over the Three Children of the Captivity, so that the *Fire had no power upon them, while they walk'd in the midst of the burning fiery Furnace?*

Dan. 3. 25.

But if these remarkable Instances are not enough to scatter away our anxious Fears, yet surely our Reason must shew us their guilt and folly. For shall we be afraid to Trust in God, when we so often put an entire Confidence in our Brother, and our Friend?

When *the Fathers of our Flesh* are returning to Corruption, they lay themselves down to Rest, perfectly satisfied, if they can place their most important Concerns, and the dearest

est

est Objects of their Love, in the hands of a Prudent, Just, and Faithfull Guardian. Yet how liable is his Wisdom to fail! how easily may they entertain too kind an opinion of his Justice! and how much may they be mistaken in his suppos'd Fidelity! But if none of these should fail; though he were Prudent, Just, and Faithfull, even as God, yet he must *die like a Man, and then all his Friendly thoughts perish.* But the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God, can never cease, unless it were possible for Eternity to come to an End.

To Distrust God, is Impious; and to Trust in our selves, is no less Vain than Impious. And yet this is our case, when we entertain a Presumptuous opinion of our own measures. If we Distrust God, we think his Assistance insufficient for us; and if we Trust in our selves, we think our own Strength sufficient for us. The Former is inconsistent with our Knowledge of God. The Latter is inconsistent with the Knowledge of our selves.

Our admir'd measures are doubly liable to Disappointment, as they are too weak to accomplish our Purpose, and as they provoke God to defeat us, that he may mortify our Pride, and abate the swelling of our Vanity.

Should God permit us to try our strength, and lay all the stress upon it, that it is able to bear; and should he suffer our counsels to prevail, as far as their Imperfect nature will allow, yet they would fall short of our expectations, and serve only to shew, how frail

they

they are
God is
found
towrin
threed
our cr
means
an Adv
the ad
fel of
be este

We
we tal
Desire
own m
trust i
direct
trust i

Th
but it
it in
a goo
full m
from
to fin
of ob

But
at fir
yet as
ctices
nounc
cast o

Ser

they are, without the Divine Assistance. But God is most especially pleas'd when he confounds our haughty Devices, crushes our towering Imaginations, and breaks the feeble threads of the Spiders web. And he confounds our craftiest Schemes by the most unlikely means, by the despis'd weakness and folly of an Adversary whom we disdain'd to fear. And the advice of *Hushai* prevails, when the counsel of *Achitophel* is rejected, though it us'd to be esteem'd as *an Oracle of God*.

2 Sam. 16: 23.

We are also guilty of distrusting God, when we take any Indirect courses to gratify our Desires. If we presume too much upon our own measures, we forsake him, and put our trust in our selves. And if we take any Indirect courses, we forsake him, and put our trust in the Devil.

This has been already guarded against; but it may not be unnecessary to guard against it in this place, since after we have propos'd a good End, and resolv'd to pursue it by lawfull means, we are often inclin'd to depart from our Resolution, and betake our selves to sinfull ways, through an impatient desire of obtaining our End.

But how much soever we were in the right at first, and how closely soever we kept to it, yet as soon as we commit any Indirect Practices, we lose and bewilder our selves, renounce the Benefit of God's favour, and are cast out of the Divine Protection.

The Duty and Happiness

est Objects of their Love, in the hands of a Prudent, Just, and Faithfull Guardian. Yet how liable is his Wisdom to fail! how easily may they entertain too kind an opinion of his Justice! and how much may they be mistaken in his suppos'd Fidelity! But if none of these should fail; though he were Prudent, Just, and Faithfull, even as God, yet he must *die like a Man, and when all his Friendly thoughts perish.* But the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God, can never cease, unless it were possible for Eternity to come to an End.

To Distrust God, is Impious; and to Trust in our selves, is no less Vain than Impious. And yet this is our case, when we entertain a Presumptuous opinion of our own measures. If we Distrust God, we think his Assistance insufficient for us; and if we Trust in our selves, we think our own Strength sufficient for us. The Former is inconsistent with our Knowledge of God. The Latter is inconsistent with the Knowledge of our selves.

Our admir'd measures are doubly liable to Disappointment, as they are too weak to accomplish our Purpose, and as they provoke God to defeat us, that he may mortify our Pride, and abate the swelling of our Vanity.

Should God permit us to try our strength, and lay all the stress upon it, that it is able to bear; and should he suffer our counsels to prevail, as far as their Imperfect nature will allow, yet they would fall short of our expectations, and serve only to shew, how frail they

they

they
God
foun
towr
thre
our
mean
an A
the a
fel c
be e
W
we
Defi
own
trust
dire
trust
T
but
it in
a go
full
from
to f
of c
E
at f
yet
ctic
nou
cas

they are, without the Divine Assistance. But God is most especially pleas'd when he confounds our haughty Devices, crushes our towering Imaginations, and breaks the feeble threads of the Spiders web. And he confounds our craftiest Schemes by the most unlikely means, by the despis'd weakness and folly of an Adversary whom we disdain'd to fear. And the advice of *Hushai* prevails, when the counsel of *Achitophel* is rejected, though it us'd to be esteem'd as *an Oracle of God*.

2 Sam. 16: 23.

We are also guilty of distrusting God, when we take any Indirect courses to gratify our Desires. If we presume too much upon our own measures, we forsake him, and put our trust in our selves. And if we take any Indirect courses, we forsake him, and put our trust in the Devil.

This has been already guarded against; but it may not be unnecessary to guard against it in this place, since after we have propos'd a good End, and resolv'd to pursue it by lawfull means, we are often inclin'd to depart from our Resolution, and betake our selves to sinfull ways, through an impatient desire of obtaining our End.

But how much soever we were in the right at first, and how closely soever we kept to it, yet as soon as we commit any Indirect Practices, we lose and bewilder our selves, renounce the Benefit of God's favour, and are cast out of the Divine Protection.

The Duty and Happiness

The Pernicious Consequences of it should be strictly consider'd, as to our private, and our publick Interest. For when we think our Cause is in danger, we are prone to endeavour its rescue, by Unwarrantable means. Hence an impatient Zeal has prompted many to save a falling Church, by transgressing its sacred Ordinances, and to defend the Constitution of their Country, even by overturning it.

But let the words of the Excellent *Sanderson* be for ever remembred; "Those things that are simply Unlawfull, may not be done by any Man, at any time, upon any colour or pretension whatsoever; not for the avoiding of Scandal, not at the instance of any Friend, or command of any Power upon Earth; not for the maintenance of the Lives or Liberties, either of our selves or others; not for the defence of Religion, not for the preservation of Church or State; no nor yet, if that could be imagin'd possible, for the Salvation of a Soul, no not for the Redemption of the whole World.

Let This deter us from all unrighteous Practices, and engage us to *commit our way unto the Lord, and put our trust in him*. This is our Duty; and we cannot but perform it; if we consider,

2dly, The certainty of its Reward, *He will bring it to pass*. We have the strongest security for it, that we can possibly desire; for Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, are engag'd in our behalf.

The

The Wisdom of God has at once a full and comprehensive view of all the Accidents and Occurrences, that make up the whole scheme of things, and run through the long train of Generations and Ages.

And he not only sees them apart from one another, and as they are at present, either Good or Evil, but also as they are interwoven, and blended together, and are productive of Consequences vastly different from their first appearance. That which conduces to our present Happiness, may afterwards tend to our Misery; and while we admire it in one view, we seldom regard it in the other.

But an All-wise God has a more perfect knowledge of our Interest, and pursues it through ways that seem unlikely to us, and carries it on through all those windings and changes which puzzle and intercept our prospect.

Our Thoughts are unable to keep themselves intent upon our appointed End, and are either diverted from it, by a multitude of Objects, or dazled and weakned, by looking too long upon it.

But the Wisdom of God is constantly mindfull of its Important purposes, and can never be drawn from the punctual execution of them.

And His Power has all the Affairs of Life in its hand, and can bring together the several Circumstances that contribute to our Happiness, as he will gather the scatter'd parts

The Duty and Happiness

of our corrupted Bodies from the four corners of the World.

And though our condition should seem absolutely desperate, and we were as unlikely to be restor'd to an happy State, as the *dry Bones* Ezek. 37. 6. in the Prophet, were to *Live*, yet as he brought up *Flesh upon them, and cover'd them with Skin, and put Breath into them*: so he would have mercy upon us, in our Affliction, and seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick.

His Righteous Servants do sometimes lie Ps. 107. 10, 13, 14. in *Darkness, and under the shadow of Death, being fast bound in Misery and Iron*. But when they cry unto the Lord, in their Trouble, he brings them out of the shadow of Death, and breaks their Bonds Acts 12. 7. in sunder. The Angel of the Lord comes upon them, and a Light shines in their Prison, and their chains fall off from their hands.

And whatsoever they undertake, at his command, every difficulty flies before them, v. 18. and gives way, as the *Iron Gate did to St Peter, which open'd to him of his own accord*. He goes before them, as he went before Cyrus his Anointed, Ezek. 45. 2. and makes the crooked Places straight, breaks in pieces the Gates of Brass, and cuts in sunder the Bars of Iron.

This is a perpetual Spring of Joy to the Righteous, that Almighty Power is employ'd in their defence, and directed to promote their Interest by Infinite Goodness.

This

This Amiable Perfection can never be wearied or exhausted. The limits of Time are too narrow to confine it; and the whole World contains but a little part of it, though *the Fullness thereof* is deriv'd from it. It requires a larger Space to display it self in, and reaches through all the Portions of Time, and the Ages of Eternity. And it bears the most tender regard to the Happiness of Man, and cleaves faster to us, than a Brother, a Parent, or a Friend. Its watchfull affection is mindfull of us, when we are forgetfull of our selves, and is allways more ready to Hear than we to Pray.

Perhaps it does not immediately give us the thing we desire, because it may be more for our Advantage to detain it. And if it wholly denies it to us, it is only for the sake of a more valuable Blessing.

Let us therefore *commit our way to God, and put our whole Trust in him*; for *He will bring it to pass*, in the manner we desire, or more effectually do it, in a better.

Let us devote the Labours of every Day to his Service, and take him for our Companion and Guide, from the opening of the Morning to the close of the Evening.

And when we *lay our selves down to Rest*, Let us deliver up all our Cares to Him, and remember that they are safe in the Bosom of an Almighty Friend.

Then *He will make us to dwell in Safety, and command his Angels to encamp round about us* : Psal. 4. 9. Psal. 34. 7.

214 *The Duty and Happiness &c.*

PROV. 4. 11, *He will Teach us in the way of Wisdom, and Lead us in right Paths. When we go, our steps shall not be straitned, and when we run, we shall not stumble. For He will Preserve our going out, and our coming in, from this Time forth for evermore.*



Per-

*Persecution contrary to the Tem-
per of the Gospel.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D on the

Fifth of *November*

Before the

U N I V E R S I T Y

O F

O X F O R D,

At St MARY'S.

St Luke IX. 55, 56.

*But he turn'd and rebuked them,
and said, ye know not what man-
ner of Spirit ye are of. For the
Son of Man is not come to destroy
men's lives, but to save them.*

W H E N the Blessed Jesus was go-
ing from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem*,
and was to pass through a *Vil-
lage of the Samaritans*, he sent

Serm. XII.

Mes-

Messengers before him, to prepare a reception for him. But so violent was the Prejudice which the *Samaritans* bore against the *Jews*, that they refus'd to receive this affectionate Friend and
 Luke 9. 53. Lover of Mankind, *because his Face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

This unkind and inhospitable Usage kind-
 v. 54. led the Indignation of *his Disciples, James and John*, and they would have call'd for *Fire from Heaven, as Elias did* upon his Adversaries, and
 Pl. 144. 6. implored the God of Vengeance to *cast forth his Lightning and tear them, and shoot out his Arrows and consume them.*

And the Disciples wanted not many specious Reasons to excuse their Severity. For the Example of *Elias* might seem to be a sufficient Warrant for their keenest Resentment of an Injury done to a greater Prophet, a Prophet of the meekest and most compassionate
 Acts 10. 38. Temper, *who went about doing Good*, and would have done it even to a *Samaritan*.

And the Affront was offer'd by a perverse, Schismatical People, who had set up a Temple near *Samaria*, in opposition to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and had made an unnecessary separation, from *Mount Sion, which*
 Pl. 132. 14, 35. *the Lord had chosen to be an habitation for himself, and of which he had said, this shall be my Rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.*

But although these specious Reasons might be urg'd in their behalf, yet the Son of God who declar'd his Almighty Power most cheifly
 in

to the Temper of the Gospel. 217

in shewing Mercy and Pity, was pleas'd to rebuke their Passion with that powerfull Voice, *with which he rebukes even the Winds and the Seas*, Mat. 8. 26, *and they obey him. He turn'd and rebuk'd them*, 27. Luke 9. 55, *and said, ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them.* 56.

And had all that profess'd Christianity, duly consider'd this just rebuke; had they been directed by the same Spirit of Love and Charity, as their Lord and Master breath'd forth, in all his Doctrines, in every Action of his Life, and most especially in the Agonies of Death; they would have with-held their hand from those dreadful Instances, of Murder and Parricide, which have been committed under the pretence of Religion: and most certainly they would have abhorr'd that amazing Villany which was prepar'd for Execution, and happily prevented upon this joyfull Day.

But the Papists were inflam'd with implacable, and unrelenting Hatred, and the most impatient desire of Revenge. And being *possess'd* by these *evil Spirits*, they thirsted after Bloud, and were resolv'd to shed it, by the most extensive, and surprizing Act of Cruelty, which surpass'd all the Cruelty of past Ages, and will almost exceed the belief of those that are to come, which was contrary to all the Principles of Humanity, and all the Precepts of Religion, and which *all People, Nations, and Languages*, must for ever condemn; and the most

most favourable Judgment, that can be pass'd upon them is this, that *they knew not what manner of Spirit they were of.*

That we may be possess'd with a lively sense of the greatness of our Deliverance, and a just abhorrence, of that cruel, unnatural, persecuting Spirit which would have plung'd us into the depth of Misery; I shall shew,

First, That it is contrary to the Spirit of our Saviour, the Temper of his Gospel, and the manner in which it was propagated and spread abroad.

Secondly, That it destroys the end and design of all Religion. And,

Thirdly, That it turns to the Prejudice of that Cause which it endeavours to Promote. And

First, It is contrary to the Spirit of our Saviour. This was the description which the Isai. 53. 7. Prophet *Isaiah* gave of the Messiah. *He was oppress'd, and he was afflicted, yet he open'd not his Mouth: he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a Sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he open'd not his Mouth.* And his Character that is drawn by *St Peter*, is like unto 1 Pet. 2. 23. it; *when he was reviled, he reviled not again, when he suffer'd, he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth Righteously.*

And agreeably to both, the Course of his Actions was a continual Proof of the most remarkable Meekness, and unwearied Patience

tience
as his
his Lo
the im
the Bo
Men;
Doctr
Instan
Mercy

He
gels to
hardn
his wo
cept.
chose
his Fe
engag
fions,
saf'd
suppo
migh
He
genu
ing i
Offer
woula
Peace
He
made
of T
fare
heavy
Yoke

tience and Forbearance. And his Life as well as his Death, was a convincing Testimony of his Love to Mankind. When he entred upon the important work of his Ministry, he heal'd the Bodies, that he might save the Souls of Men; and endeavour'd to recommend his Doctrines to them, by the most endearing Instances of Goodness, and Miracles of Mercy.

He might have commanded *Legions of Angels* to publish his Gospel, and destroy those hardned Wretches that refus'd to hearken to his wonderfull overtures of Kindness, and accept the means of Reconciliation. But he chose rather to treat them, as if they were his Fellow-Creatures, and win upon them by engaging Familiarity, affectionate Perswasions, and earnest Intreaties. And he vouchsaf'd to Converse even with them, that were suppos'd to be the worst of Sinners, that he might gently lead them to Repentance.

He receiv'd the most ungratefull and disin-
genuous Provocations; but instead of execut-
ing immediate Vengeance upon the daring
Offenders, *he wept over Jerusalem, because she*
would not know the things that belong'd to her Luk. 19. 41,
Peace, before they were hid from her Eyes. 42.

How obliging was the Invitation which he
made to the Multitude of Sinners! How full
of Tendernefs and Concern for their Wel-
fare! *Come unto me all ye that labour and are* Mat. 11. 28,
heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Take my 29.
Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek
and

and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.

John 10. 31,
32.

When *the Jews took up Stones to stone him*, the barbarous Injury drew from him this mild, but piercing Rebuke, *many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of those works do ye stone me?*

Mat. 26.

And even when *they came with swords and staves to seize him*, and the provocation was heightened by the Treachery and baseness of the accursed Judas, he reprov'd the Zealous Disciple, that *stretch'd out his band* in his defence, *and stroke a Servant of the High Priest, and smote off his Ear*; and he wrought a Cure

v. 51, 52.

Luk. 22. 51.

upon his wounded Adversary, *he touch'd his Ear and heal'd him.*

It was the constant Endeavour of his malicious Accusers, to find him guilty of raising Sedition, and being an Enemy to *Cesar's* Government. But though great Numbers of People followed him, either to hear his Doctrines, or for the Benefit of his mighty Works, yet no Disturbance was given to the Publick Peace, no just occasion of Jealousy to the *Roman* Governour.

Mat. 3. 15.

But as *he was obedient to the Law, and fulfill'd all Righteousness*, so he strictly answer'd the Demands of the Civil Magistrate, and perform'd a Miracle, that he might pay Tribute for himself and his Disciple.

Mat. 22. 15.

And when *the Pharisees took Counsel how they might entangle him in their Talk*, and expected an offensive Return to their ensnaring Questions,

to the Temper of the Gospel. 221

stions, he disappointed them in such a manner, as left God, and his Vice-gerent, in the full Possession of their respective Rights; *Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's: and unto God the things that are God's.* So little Reason is there to encroach upon the Power of the one, under a Pretence of serving the other!

The Blessed Jesus bound the Duties of Religion with stronger Ties upon the Consciences of Men, than ever were laid upon them before; and at the same time he more effectually secur'd the Rights of every one, carefully preserv'd the Peace of Kingdoms, and set a lasting Fence and Guard about it. So far was he from dissolving the common Obligations of Mankind, and giving the Subject a Commission to cast off the Bands of Allegiance, and promote his Religion by Rebellion, Massacres, and Tortures, whensoever his Prince should differ from him!

How contrary then is the Spirit of the *Romish* Church to that of the Innocent Jesus! How far from his Intentions was that horrid Conspiracy, which would have involv'd the King, *the Breath of our Nostrils*, the Queen, the Parent of all our Hopes, the Princes, the Nobility, the Spiritual Fathers, the aged Counsellours, and the promising Youth of our Country, in one common Destruction! How fierce was that Zeal which would have swallow'd them up in an Instant, without the least fear or apprehension of their Danger, and would have made almost as great a Slaughter

as

Ex. 12. 30. as there was in *Egypt*, when *there was not an House where there was not one Dead!*

How unreasonable was the Wrath of those Ministers of Cruelty, that would have rejoyc'd in their Misery, though they had no other Crime to charge upon them but this, *that*
 Acts 24. 14. *after the way which they call'd Heresy, so Worshipp'd they the God of their Fathers!*

And this dreadfull Attempt was as contrary to the Temper of the Gospel, as to the Spirit of its Authour. For the same good Nature that shew'd it self in every Action of our Saviour, could not but run through all his Doctrines, and be their distinguishing Character. It was his Endeavour to render us like to God, by prevailing with us to purify our selves from the Corruption of our Nature; but still he labour'd to cultivate and improve every thing that was good in us, and perpetually taught us, that nothing could raise us to a nearer Resemblance of the most amiable of the Divine Perfections, than the Practice of that excellent Virtue, which bears the agreeable Name of Humanity.

And the Duties of Love and Charity have a peculiar Stamp set upon them, and are more especially enforc'd by his Authority; and whatsoever he has offer'd in their behalf, bespeaks our Attention with those engaging
 Joh. 13. 34. Words, *A new Commandment I give unto you:*
 Joh. 15. 12. *and this is my Commandment.*

And if the sense of Benefits, or the remembrance of the most faithfull Friend, or the
 hopes

hopes of Mercy can move us; if we have any Principles of Gratitude, any Thoughts of the most tender Affection, any Fears of future Misery; we ought to be kind and compassionate to one another.

There is a mighty stress laid upon it, not only as it is a Duty most valuable in it self; but also as it is a Duty in which we are too likely to fail.

And our Saviour seems to have recommended it with the greater Earnestness, because he was aware that the Passions of Mankind would prompt them to deviate from it, though their double Relation as Men, and Christians, obliges them to it, and even their own Bowels put them in mind of it.

Our Lord and Master, by whose Name we are call'd, has made Charity the Badge and Mark of his Followers. But had not he appointed it, yet one would think they should have chosen it themselves; for since the Gospel is a Covenant of Mercy, and every Page of it is full of the highest Expressions of Goodness, and the most surprizing Acts of Forgiveness to Man, a sinfull and rebellious Creature; it is natural to conclude, that they that partake of these inestimable Benefits, that were once condemn'd to the same eternal Misery, and are now equally entitled to the same unspeakable Happiness, should delight to copy after the glorious Pattern that was set before them, and to draw a Resemblance, though a faint Resemblance of it; and were
it

it possible for them to forgive *much*, they should do it, were it only for this Reason, *because much is forgiven them.*

But Experience too plainly tells us, that even those that make the greatest boast of their Religion, and pretend to be the most zealous Advocates for Christianity, do indulge themselves in the most unreasonable Passions and violent Resentments. And instead of being mov'd by the Mercies of Jesus, and having a compassionate sense of them, whom they think to be in Error, they rejoyce to run into the greatest excess of Cruelty, and pursue their Revenge to the utmost extent of their Power. With the disappointed *Jonah*, they say they *do well to be Angry*, and impatiently wish for the Destruction of every one that dissents from them; as the murmuring Prophet did for the Destruction of *Niniveh*, wherein were more than six score thousand Persons, that could not discern between their right hand and their left.

When they have perswaded themselves that their Cause is the Cause of God, they care not what means they use in its Defence. Every thing becomes lawfull to them in their vain Opinion, even *all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and evil Speaking, with all Malice.* And they hope to merit the highest Mansions in Heaven, and the brightest Crowns of Glory, by inflicting the most exquisite Tortures, and covering the Nations with Seas of Bloud.

to the Temper of the Gospel. 225

O my Soul come not thou into their Secret; unto Gen. 49. 6.
their Assembly, mine Honour be not thou united: for
in their Anger they attempted a work full of the
 Subtilty, Baseness, Treachery, and Malice of
 the Devil; a Work that Nature trembled at,
 and the Success of which (had not God in
 his Infinite Mercy disappointed them) these
 Kingdoms must for ever have bewail'd! v. 7.
Cursed be their Anger for it was fierce, and their
Wrath for it was cruel. It would have tri-
 umph'd in the utter extirpation of the Royal
 Family, in the Slaughter of the Nobles, in
 the Tears of Widows and Orphans; and Lam. 2. 15.
when our Sion the Perfection of Beauty, the Joy
of the whole Earth; had none to comfort her; Lam. 1. 10.
then the Adversary would have spread out his hand
upon all her Pleasant things, and brought in the
 Errours of a corrupted Church, Errours as
 contrary to the Gospel of Christ, as the Me-
 thod of promoting them is, to the manner
 in which it was propagated and spread abroad.

When the Doctrines of our Saviour were
 preached to the World, the Bent and Inclina-
 tions of Men were against them; and they
 must necessarily encounter all the Difficulties
 that could arise from Prejudice, Custom and
 Authority. But yet they had no Worldly
 Force to support them, nothing to conquer
 the mistaken Opinions, the perverse Wills,
 and the stubborn Opposition of unreasonable
 Men, but the plain Testimonies that were
 given in their behalf, and their own Intrin-
 sick worth and Excellence.

Being thus recommended, and deliver'd with the greatest Simplicity, Meekness and Patience, by the Holy Apostles, they gain'd access to the Heart, and continually wrought the Conversion of their Enemies, and more Profelytes were made in one Day, by the gentle methods of Instruction, than can be made in all the Ages of the World, by Persecution.

Judges 8.
16.

It was not then the Custom to teach as *Gideon taught the Men of Succoth, with Thorns of the Wilderness and Briers*, or to force the Children to embrace a new Religion, by shedding the Blood of their Fathers. That Conviction can never be sincere which is wrought by these unnatural means; they can never heartily love that Profession which they receiv'd with Horrour.

Mai. 55. 10.

The Word of God fell from the Lips of the first Preachers of Christianity, like the kind refreshing Showers of *Rain, that water the Earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give Seed to the Sower, and Bread to the Eater*. But a Spirit of Persecution destroys as

Prov. 28. 3.

it passes along, and *is like a sweeping Rain that leaveth no Food*.

Psal. 2. 2.

At the Appearance of Christianity, *the Kings of the Earth stood up, and the Rulers took Counsel together against it*. The Religion which they profess'd was hardly any thing else but Corruption; and they were a Disgrace even to that Religion.

But

But the Disciples of Jesus treated those Monsters of Men, with the Deference and Regard that was due to their Authority, and peaceably submitted to a Persecuting Nero, whose Reign was polluted not only with the Bloud of Christians, but of his Mother and his Friend.

Many and severe were the Charges that were brought against the Followers of Christ; yet they appear'd to be without Reason, and without Foundation; and the strictest inquiry into their Behaviour, could find no Crime to accuse them of, but this, that they constantly perform'd their Duty to their Lord, and were Charitable to one another. And this was so very remarkable, that it forc'd the worst of Enemies, even an Apostate to acknowledge it, and propose the Example of the hated Christians to the Imitation of the Heathen.

So just was their Cause, and so suitable to it their Deportment, that the learn'd Fathers desir'd only to represent their Case; and if they could be heard, they doubted not the Success of their Apologies; and such was their Influence, that they suspended the Force of Persecution, *stopp'd the Mouths of Lions, quench'd the violence of Fire, and took away the edge of the Sword.* These were their Weapons, and by these they turn'd to flight the Armies of their Adversaries, and made all Opposition fall before them. Heb. ii. 33^r

It may indeed be objected, and it has been very wickedly objected, that they did not Re-

fist, because they durst not, that their Power was too weak to attempt it, and they submitted rather upon a Principle of Policy than Religion. But the increasing Number of Christians wip'd off this scandalous Reflection by their Practice. For if they were too weak to
 A&S 1. 13. *Rebell when they Assembled in an upper Room,*
 Heb. 11. 38. *or in Dens and Caves of the Earth, to Worship God;* certainly they were not too weak to do it, when the Court and the Camp was full of them, and the greater part of the *Roman Empire* were Christians. And they gave an unexceptionable Proof of their Submission, when they would neither commit Idolatry, nor save their Lives by Resistance, though they were the Flower of the Army, and were able to destroy their Persecutors. They patiently saw their Brethren chosen and mark'd for Slaughter, and with Swords in their hands waited for their own Execution.

But since Kings have been *Nursing Fathers, and Queens Nursing Mothers to the Church*, That Desireable Blessing has been so far abused, as to encourage some that would engross the Name of Christians, to rebell against that Authority, which gave them Protection, and to
 Isa. 49. 23. *delight in Confusion and every evil Work.* And whensoever their Sovereign has refus'd to embrace their Errors, and subscribe to their Arbitrary Opinions, they have combin'd against his Honour, his Peace, and his Life, and devoted all that adher'd to him, to Slaughter and Destruction; and while their malicious
 Jam. 3. 16. *De-*

to
 Defig
 dinar
 have
 est V
 the d
 heard
 concei

Sec
 and I
 our D
 Passio
 as we
 appoi
 Happ
 priva
 to gr
 their
 but d
 indul
 lence

Re
 taken
 Evils
 word
 did it
 corru
 carry
 and n
 Wick
 confu
 It
 bears

to the Temper of the Gospel. 229

Designs have been cover'd with an extraordinary Zeal for the Catholick Cause, they have not scrupled to bring to pass the blackest Villanies, and exercise their Cruelty in all the direfull ways, *that Eye hath seen, or Ear* 1 Cor. 2. 9. *heard, or it can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive.* Which brings me,

Secondly, To shew that this destroys the End and Design of all Religion. A great part of our Duty consists in the Government of our Passions and Affections; and it is our Interest as well as our Duty to keep them within their appointed Bounds; for it conduces to the Happiness of Man, both in his publick and private Capacity; and when they are let loose to gratify themselves to the full, and enjoy their belov'd *excess of Riot*, there is nothing but disorder and anarchy in the Breast that indulges them, nothing but tumult and violence in the State.

Religion has therefore very justly undertaken the Regulation of these dangerous Evils, and check'd them with these mighty words, *hitherto shall ye come, but no farther.* And Job 38. 11. did it not thus confine and restrain them, the corrupt Inclinations of deprav'd Man would carry him forth into every kind of Mischief, and never stop till he was become compleatly Wicked, and had wrought a Master-piece, a consummate Instance of Iniquity.

It is for this Reason that the subtle Villain bears an inveterate Hatred to Religion, be-

sist, because they durst not, that their Power was too weak to attempt it, and they submitted rather upon a Principle of Policy than Religion. But the increasing Number of Christians wip'd off this scandalous Reflection by their Practice. For if they were too weak to
 Acts 1. 13. Rebell when they Assembled *in an upper Room,*
 Heb. 11. 38. *or in Dens and Caves of the Earth,* to Worship God; certainly they were not too weak to do it, when the Court and the Camp was full of them, and the greater part of the *Roman Empire* were Christians. And they gave an unexceptionable Proof of their Submission, when they would neither commit Idolatry, nor save their Lives by Resistance, though they were the Flower of the Army, and were able to destroy their Persecutors. They patiently saw their Brethren chosen and mark'd for Slaughter, and with Swords in their hands waited for their own Execution.

Isa. 49. 23. But since Kings have been *Nursing Fathers, and Queens Nursing Mothers to the Church,* That Desireable Blessing has been so far abused, as to encourage some that would engross the Name of Christians, to rebell against that Authority, which gave them Protection, and to
 Jam. 3. 16. delight in *Confusion and every evil Work.* And whensoever their Sovereign has refus'd to embrace their Errors, and subscribe to their Arbitrary Opinions, they have combin'd against his Honour, his Peace, and his Life, and devoted all that adher'd to him, to Slaughter and Destruction; and while their malicious
 De-

to
 Defig
 dinary
 have
 est Vi
 the di
 heard,
 conceiv

Seco
 and D
 our D
 Passio
 as wel
 appoin
 Happi
 privat
 to gra
 their l
 but di
 indulg
 lence

Rel
 taken
 Evils,
 words
 did it
 corrup
 carry
 and no
 Wicke
 confun
 It i
 bears

to the Temper of the Gospel. 229

Designs have been cover'd with an extraordinary Zeal for the Catholick Cause, they have not scrupled to bring to pass the blackest Villanies, and exercise their Cruelty in all the direfull ways, *that Eye hath seen, or Ear* 1 Cor. 2. 9. *heard, or it can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive.* Which brings me,

Secondly, To shew that this destroys the End and Design of all Religion. A great part of our Duty consists in the Government of our Passions and Affections; and it is our Interest as well as our Duty to keep them within their appointed Bounds; for it conduces to the Happiness of Man, both in his publick and private Capacity; and when they are let loose to gratify themselves to the full, and enjoy their belov'd *excess of Riot*, there is nothing but disorder and anarchy in the Breast that indulges them, nothing but tumult and violence in the State.

Religion has therefore very justly undertaken the Regulation of these dangerous Evils, and check'd them with these mighty words, *hitherto shall ye come, but no farther.* And Job 38. 11. did it not thus confine and restrain them, the corrupt Inclinations of deprav'd Man would carry him forth into every kind of Mischief, and never stop till he was become compleatly Wicked, and had wrought a Master-piece, a consummate Instance of Iniquity.

It is for this Reason that the subtle Villain bears an inveterate Hatred to Religion, be-

cause it breaks and disappoints his Measures, and by raising sudden Fears and unwelcome Apprehensions, makes him start back, even when he is almost come to the Point of accomplishing his Desires.

The infamous Politician complain'd of the weakness of Human Nature, because it durst not proceed to the utmost length of Wickedness, and be thorough-pac'd in Iniquity. And this pretended weakness is entirely owing to Religion; for this casts Scruples and Difficulties in the way of the mightiest Sinners, and *takes off their Chariot Wheels that they drive them heavily.*

Ex. 14. 25.

But alas! such is the Religion of the cruel and unrelenting Papist, that it becomes subservient to the worst Purposes, and abets and encourages all manner of Evil.

When a band of Men are combin'd against Religion, be their Resolutions never so strong, their Inclinations never so violent, yet they are hindred in a surprizing and unaccountable manner, and cannot be so bad as they would be; some of their Accomplices are touch'd with a sense of Guilt, or with the feeble remains of Humanity, or with unexpected diffidence and fear of discovery. But when they *do Evil that Good may come*, and think themselves secure under the Patronage of Religion, then they go on undaunted to the Commission of the most horrid Crimes, and use the most unlawfull means for obtaining their End, with a full and entire choice, and

Rom. 3. 8.

un-

to the Temper of the Gospel. 231

undivided consent. Every mercifull thought or motion towards Pity, is rejected as inconsistent with their Duty, and they imagin, they should be false to God, if they shew any Compassion to Men.. Then they can *settle their* ^{2 Kings 8. 11.} *Countenance stedfastly*, and boldly meditate upon the Evils they design to perform, Evils as dreadfull as those, at the mention of which *the Man of God wept, and Hazael said, what is* ^{v. 12, 13.} *thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great thing?*

And they will with Pleasure *set on fire the strong Holds* of those whom they call their Enemies, *slay their young Men with the Sword, and dash their Childrea, and rip up their Women with Child.*

Wretched is the Condition of Mankind, when Religion arms them against one another! and sad are the Effects, when our unruly Passions take Encouragement from it! And yet it cannot be denied, that they are too much encourag'd by the *Romish* Religion.

How might the malicious Villain applaud himself, when he thought of the Conspiracy that was form'd against us, and consider'd how artfully the train was laid, how likely it was to succeed, and how one decisive blow would accomplish every thing that his Heart could wish for! How might the Passionate and Revengefull rejoyce, that they were not to wait for the tedious forms of Trials and Executions, but might in an Instant consume their Adversaries, by a Destruction as swift

as

as their Thoughts, and even as soon as that ambiguous Letter could be burnt, which obscurely describ'd the manner of it, and by a forc'd and unusual Interpretation became the means of Discovery! And how might the Man of a fowr and ill-natur'd Spirit, please himself with the Ruin and Havock that would be made, and the Confusion and Sorrow that would overwhelm the unhappy Families that had lost a Parent, a Brother, or a Friend! But Thanks be to God, they were disappointed. And

Lastly, This cruel Spirit turn'd to the Prejudice of that Cause which it design'd to promote. Great indeed is the Injury which it does to Religion in general; and hence it is that the Infidels rejoyce and triumph in an Opportunity of reflecting upon Christianity; and it cannot but fill us with Horrour, that a set of Men train'd up in Iniquity, and qualified and prepar'd to disturb the Peace of Nations, and defile every Kingdom with Bloud, should pretend to be of the Order of Jesus, and prostitute that Name which is so full of Mercy, to cover and even justify the most execrable Impieties.

But we cannot hope that they should ever have any regard to Christianity, ever reflect on the dishonour they cast upon it. Yet one would think they should consider the Prejudice that they do to their own Cause, and their belov'd Corruptions. The Errours of the Church

to
Church
that t
Capac
the M
must b
hood
they t
of Arg
their C
Remen
an eff
whilst
Fear
ry, we
Religi
But
Unch
full C
vision
again
that
wish I
fond
far e
for th
Soul,
of th
sue t
carry
D
shoul
wish
accu

Church of *Rome* are so gross and palpable, that they must necessarily be obvious to all Capacities; and if any Arguments can reach the Minds of the most ignorant People, they must be reach'd by those that prove the Falseness and Absurdity of their Religion: But they that will not, or cannot attend to a Train of Arguments, will be affected with a sense of their Cruelty; and this will be for ever *had in Remembrance*. This will be a lasting Objection, an effectual Barrier against the Papists. And whilst we have any Love for our selves, any Fear of Danger, any Apprehension of Misery, we shall certainly abhor that Bloud-thirsty Religion.

But while we are justly condemning their Unchristian Spirit, we must bewail the dreadful Consequences of our own unhappy Divisions. So strong are the Prejudices of Men against each other, so violent their Hatred, that some profligate Wretches presume to wish Damnation to their Adversaries, and are fond of uttering that amazing Curse! This far exceeds the bitter Zeal of the Papists; for they pretend to desire the Salvation of the Soul, while they rejoyce in the Destruction of the Body. But these unnatural Furies pursue their Revenge beyond the Grave, and carry it even to Hell.

Deluded Fools! is it possible that you should know what Damnation means, and wish that your Brethren should fall into that accursed State? Have you torn out your
Bowels,

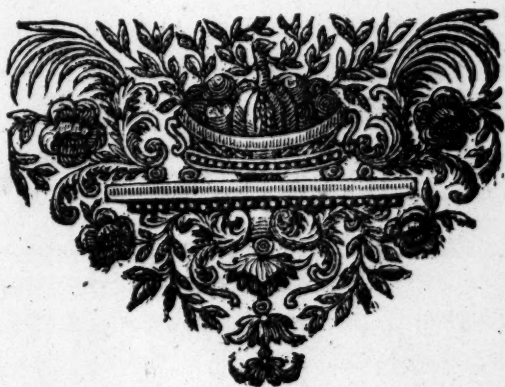
Lam. 1. 12. Bowels, and renounc'd the Mercies of Jesus? Have you forgotten his Agony and bloody Sweat, his Cross and Passion? *Was it nothing to you that there was not any Sorrow like his Sorrow* for sinfull Men? can you desire that it should be of no Effect to those Immortal Souls whom he died to Redeem? surely you do not consider; for if you consider'd you must relent; *you know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.*

But if there is any one that tramples upon the ruins of Humanity, and is so far lost to every thing that bears the Name of Pity, as to wish for the Damnation of his Enemies, in the full Meaning and Importance of that Complication of all Evils; Let him remember Pl. 109. 16, 17. *the words of the Psalmist; his delight was in Cursing, and it shall happen unto him: he lov'd not Blessing, therefore it shall be far from him. He clothed himself with Cursing, like as with a Raiment: and it shall come into his Bowels like Water, and like Oyl into his Bones.*

Eph. 4. 1, 2. But let us endeavour to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.* Let us forgive those who without any cause are our Enemies, and try to win upon them by repeated Offices of Kindness, and Compassion. And whereas on the one hand they even boast of their Cruelty, and on the other, falsely pretend to Moderation; Let us constantly exercise that truly Christian Virtue. Let this be,

to the Temper of the Gospel. 235

be, as it has allways been, the Glory of the Church of *England*; and in this famous Univerſity, the Nurſery of Religion, and the Fountain of Learning, may good Nature and Humanity for ever Flourish and Abound.



The

The

S

P

S

Thou

Th

lie

T

not de

Sern

*The Necessity of shewing our Faith
by our Works.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
PARISH-CHURCH

O F
St. C L E M E N T,
O X F O R D.

St. James II. 19.

*Thou believest that there is one God;
Thou dost well: the Devils also be-
lieve and tremble.*

THE Proofs of the Being of a God
strike with so bright an Evidence
upon the minds of Men, that they
are constrain'd to believe, and can-
not deny their assent to this great important
Serm. XIII. Truth.

Truth. But the corruption of Nature prevails so far; and their Affections cleave so fast to their Vices, that they endeavour to persuade themselves, that the bare Belief of a God is sufficient for them; and desire to rest in the Profession, without the Practice of Religion.

And could they obtain this favourable Indulgence, we should hear no more complaints of the difficulty of Believing; The Atheist would give up his admir'd Cavils, and darling Objections, and would be contented to renounce his Infidelity, if he might still continue in Immorality. —

The Ancient Hereticks labour'd to procure this state of Licentiousness, — and flatter'd themselves into an Opinion, that they might believe in God, and serve their Sins, like the *2 Kings 17. 33.* strange Nations that were Planted in *Samaria, who fear'd the Lord, and serv'd their own gods.*

The Works of the Ceremonial Law, having been justly prov'd to be no longer necessary; they argued from thence against the necessity of the Moral Law. And they concluded that Faith alone was so Excellent, or even so Meritorious, that they might lay their whole Strefs upon it, and needed no other Title to Eternal Happiness.

To prevent the fatal Effects of this erroneous Notion, the Apostle St. *James* speaks against it with a becoming warmth, and earnestness of expression, and the utmost force *Jam. 2. 17.* of Argument. He shews that *Faith without Works*

Works is dead; entirely unprofitable, and ineffectual to Salvation; and very far prefers the Man that *shews his Faith by his Works*, be-
 fore him, who *shews his Faith without Works*. Jam. 2. 18.
 And at length applying himself to the latter, he offers a dreadful, but certain and weighty Truth to his consideration: *Thou believest that there is one God; Thou dost well; the Devils also believe and tremble*. He commends him for Believing; but tells him, the Devils also do the same. And if it cannot avail for the abatement of the Torments of Hell, it can never avail for the attainment of the Happiness of Heaven.

That this powerfull Argument may make a due impression upon us, I shall shew,

First, That the bare Belief of a God is ineffectual to Salvation. And

Secondly, That it will serve only to aggravate our Guilt, and sharpen our Punishment. And

First, It is ineffectual to Salvation, because it is not properly a Virtue. It rests in the Mind without exerting it self, and lies dormant there, without inclining the Will to Obey, or bringing the Affections into Subjection to God. And we may illustrate its weakness and insufficiency, by an obvious and familiar Instance. Should a Subject acknowledge his Sovereign to have a lawfull and undoubted Right to his Crown, and declare it to be his constant Opinion, and yet withhold

The Necessity of shewing

hold his Obedience from him, and refuse to make the due returns for Protection: we should certainly think his Demands unreasonable if he claim'd a Place of Profit or Honour, as a just reward of this vain acknowledgment, and empty declaration. And we should think him yet more unreasonable, if he not only neglected his Service, but engag'd in Rebellion against him; and yet expected that the owning of his Title should be esteem'd an undeniable Plea for Pardon.

And if the sleight Acknowledgment of an Earthly Sovereign falls short of our Duty to him, how much shorter must as sleight an acknowledgment fall of our Duty to the King of Heaven!

And St. *James* has fully Illustrated the case, in the Instance of Charity. Though we make the most specious Pretensions to that glorious Virtue, yet unless we *bring forth Fruits* worthy of it, *it is less than nothing, and Vanity.* If a Brother or Sister be naked and destitute of daily Food, and we say unto them, *Depart in Peace, be ye warm'd and fill'd: and notwithstanding this, give them not those things that are needfull to the Body; what doth it profit?* It is not Charity, but an Insolent Sarcastm, that *vexes the Soul* of the needy, and *breaks them in pieces with words.*

How fatally was the Church of *Laodicea* deceiv'd, when *she said she was Rich, and increas'd with Goods, and had need of nothing*, though she was *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!* Thus are they deceiv'd, who sa-

tisfy

tisfy themselves with believing, that there is an Infinitely Wise, and Just, and Holy God, while they offend his Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness.

Moreover the barren Belief of a God, is not properly a Virtue, because we are almost compell'd to believe, there is a God. To assent to a well attested Truth, is not a matter of choice, but rather a necessary operation of the Mind. For Truth is its natural Object; and when it presents it self, supported by Authentick Testimony, the Mind as readily receives it, as the Eye does the Light, when it springs forth from its Fountain.

We may indeed confine our selves to a Place of darkness, or shut our Eyes that the Light may not shine in upon them; and we may be so Perverse, as to argue, that there is no such Thing as Light, that it is only a pleasing Vision, and exists only in our Imagination. But at the same Time, we cannot but know, that we obstinately confine our selves, and suffer Violence and Torture, that we may not behold the Light.

And the same Perverseness may tempt us to reject all the Proofs of the Being of a God, and guard every Passage to our Minds, that no Argument may enter into them. And whilst we suspend our Reason, and disdain to hearken to the reports even of our Senses, we may insolently affirm, that there is no God, and attempt to Laugh away the Belief of him, as the Invention of Priest-craft, or

The Necessity of shewing

the Imposition of Arbitrary Power. But still we unavoidably know that we offer an unnatural Violence to our selves, and can hardly withstand the Proofs that surround us, though we scornfully cast them off, with the most Inveterate Prejudice.

We live in the midst of them; They cry unto us, whithersoever we go, and continual-
 Prov. 8. 1, *ly put forth their voice:* they appear in the top
 29. 3. *of high places, by the way, in the places of the Paths:* they wait for us *at the Gates, at the entry of the City, at the coming in of the doors:* they offer themselves to each of our Senses, and
 Wisd. 6. 16. *meet us in every thought.*

Psal. 19. 1. *If we consider the Heavens, and the Beautiful order of the Moon and the Stars, The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work.*

If we could go down to Hell, and view the Prisoners that are held in Everlasting chains, the very Devils would tell us, There is a God: we should find no Atheists there: for those accursed Spirits Believe and Tremble.

If we behold the dawning of the Day, it
 Psal. 65. 8. *will proclaim his Being to us, for the out goings of the Morning praise Him.* And when the Darknes spreads it self over us, our own
 Ps. 104. 20. *Hearts assure us, that He maketh Darknes, and it is Night.*

If we think upon the Wonders of the great Deep, they constrain us to acknowledge him,
 Ps. 107. 25, *who lifteth up the Waves thereof, and who maketh the Storm a Calm.*

The

The Time would fail me to speak of the Cattle Ps. 50. 10.
upon a Thousand Hills, the Armies of Creatures that move upon the face of the Earth, the Swarms of Insects, and the Seeds of Plants, each of which Infinitely exceeds all the works of Art, and sufficiently proves the Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness of God.

But were there no other Creature than Man, he would Himself display a World of Wonders, and effectually confute his own Arguments, whilst he attempted to disown his Maker.

His Eye contains almost as many Beauties as it beholds: and the Man that curiously examines its artfull Frame, may be tempted to dwell for ever upon it, and say, as the surpriz'd Disciple did, *It is good for me to be here.* Luke 9. 33.

The Tongue that too often Blasphemes the Name of God, does yet, in spite of the Sinner, Proclaim his Glory: and those very Talents that are abus'd to the denial of a God, do undeniably shew, that there is one.

How much soever the pretended Infidel may endeavour to deface his Reason, yet it still will bear the *Image and Superscription* of God. And though degenerate Man may sink himself into the depth of Corruption, and become little more than Dust and Ashes; yet some sparks of the Heavenly Fire will remain within him, some Tokens of the Deity will be left, in the ruins of Human Nature.

And the Proofs of his Being, which we find within, and without us, which attend us,

Deut. 6. 7. *when we sit in the House, and when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up,* are abundantly confirm'd by the united Testimony of every Age and Nation.

Deut. 4. 32. *Ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created Man upon the Earth,* and they will tell you, there has been no part of Time, without the Knowledge of God. *And ask from the one side of Heaven to the other,* and it will tell you, there has not been any Nation or People entirely ignorant of him.

v. 32.

A faint and glimmering Light discover'd it self in *the Lands of Darknes;* and though the wretched Inhabitants had almost forgotten that they were Men, yet they had not utterly forgotten that there was a God.

Rom. 12.
16.

And the wisest of the Nations preserv'd the Knowledge of his Being, and valued it more than all the Improvements of their Reason. They were not so *Wise in their own conceits,* as our Modern Infidels, nor did they reject it, as a Thing above their Capacities, nor scoff at it, as a Thing below them.

When the several Countries were Peopled, the Knowledge of God spread it self over the World; and after the division of Tongues, every Speech and Language ministred to the propagation of it.

And I may appeal even to the Atheist himself concerning the Proofs of a Deity, as *St Paul* did to *Agrippa*, concerning the Prophets, *Acts 26. 27. Believest thou these things? I know that thou believest.*

For

For though all other Arguments should in vain demand his Belief, though they press him in vain to hearken to them, yet his Fears are still an unanswerable Argument, and must and will be heard. They cry so loud, that they can never be silenc'd; they are so firmly rooted in his Being, that they can never be remov'd.

His haughtiest Laughter and Derision, is but a fallacious shew to cover them; and his boasted Objections are no more. While he endeavours to shake the Faith of others, he cannot satisfy himself, but distrusts his own Foundation, while he attempts to destroy the *Rock of Ages*.

If we follow him into his Retirement, his Fears are there; if we attend him into Company, they are *there also*. Whilst he admires the Wine, when it giveth his colour in the Cup, and moveth it self aright, a guilty Terrour seizes him, that biteth like a Serpent, and stings like an Adder. Prov. 23.
v. 32.

When he buoys up his Spirits with forc'd and artificial Mirth, his Countenance is suddenly chang'd, and his Thoughts trouble him. Dan. 5. 6.

And when he is compell'd to be alone, he is an odious Companion to himself, and is self-condemn'd, though he will not own the Conviction.

If we behold the Pomp of a Triumph, and see the greatest of Infidels swelling with the Spoils of Conquest, and drawing Princes and Nobles in Chains after him, could we enter

into the Secrets of his Heart, we should find Dread and Confusion there. There would need no Slave to ride in the triumphant Chariot, no miserable Wretch to rebuke his Pride. He is himself the Slave, though he appears to be the Happiest of Men.

And while he almost imagins that he is a God, though he denies that there is one; his
 Acts 12. 23. Fears smite him, as *the Angel of the Lord smote the Blasphemous Herod*; and his accursed Soul speaks these *Bitter things* against him,
 Isai. 14. 9. *Hell from beneath is mov'd for thee to meet thee at thy coming.*

And the fears of Men are Just, since the very Devils Believe and Tremble. When the Son of God appear'd *in the form of a Servant, and the fashion of a Man, with the Infirmities of our Flesh*, and the wants of our Nature, in *Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness*, Legions of Evil Spirits acknowledg'd him in that Humble State, and were struck with Dread and Amazement at the sight of him.

Luk. 4. 33, 34, 35, 36. *In the Synagogue there was a Man which had a Spirit of an unclean Devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuk'd him, saying, Hold thy Peace, and come out of him. And when the Devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amaz'd, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this? For with Authority and Power he*

com-

commandeth the unclean Spirits, and they come out.

And Devils also came out of many, crying out, Luk. 4. 41. and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffer'd them not to speak; for they knew that he was the Christ.

The last words of the expiring Oracles which were actuated by Devils, gave Testimony to him; and when they were utterly silenc'd, their silence gave a more effectual Testimony.

And those miserable Spirits that are confin'd in the Prisons of the Damn'd, do undoubtedly believe that there is a God of Infinite Power, whose Wrath will manifest it self in a devouring Fire, and everlasting Burnings. They already feel the Rod of his Anger, living in continual Misery, and expecting a continual increase of Torment.

And knowing the certainty of it, they shew their unrelenting Hatred to Men, by tempting them to the highest degrees of Sin against God, and endeavouring to aggravate their Guilt and their Punishment.

They behold with a malicious pleasure the success of their execrable designs; and having sown the Tares, they delight (if we may call it delight) in observing the mighty growth, and seeing our Vices increase and multiply.

And this is the spring of all their Endeavours, that they know there is certainly a God, whom they fear with the greatest Terror, whom they hate with a perfect Hatred,

who

The Necessity of shewing

who is able to punish his Enemies for ever and ever.

And indeed did not the Profane themselves, believe there was a God, their impious Scoffing, and blasphemous Wit, would lose its sting and sharpness. It would not please, were it not surprizing; and it would not surprize if it were not terrible; and they could not think it terrible, if they did not think there was a God.

Were the Notion of his Being really Contemptible, they could not assume so much to themselves for despising it: their extraordinary Courage, and fancied greatness of Soul would shrink to nothing, did it consist only in ridiculing a thing of nought.

But to believe there is a God of Infinite Majesty, wonderfull in his Doings, and terrible in his Judgments; and yet to Revile him with a Daring confidence, and render him the Subject of their Ludicrous mirth, and wanton raillery; to despise the multitude of the Nations for Adoring him, and expose the weakness and cowardise of a Religious Fear, and an Holy Reverence; This is the Heroick Bravery, the Admir'd Master-piece of this Improv'd Age.

Where then is the Virtue of Believing, if we only Believe? The Impious, the Profane, the Devils, and (I may also say) the Atheists (whatsoever they pretend) do the same. We know that it is hardly possible to Disbelieve that there is a God; what then can we claim
for

for B
thing
the E
of it,
to do
of Fo
a gro
times
Weal
upon
build
If
as ju
cause
our B
in th
- O
neve
Ten
igno
and
Soul
T
Exif
we c
our
B
Hist
ptio
cern
neve
ver
if w

for Believing that there is one? when *every thing in the Heavens, in the Earth, and under the Earth*, is a Proof of his Being, to doubt of it, is no less Foolish than Impious. For to doubt without reason, is as palpable a token of Folly, as to believe without reason. And a groundless Suspicion, though it may sometimes pass for Wisdom, is a manifest sign of Weakness. Because it is dangerous to build upon the Sand, is it therefore dangerous to build upon a Rock?

If we Question the Being of a God, we may as justly Question whether we were Born, because we know not all the Circumstances of our Birth, or cannot exactly tell how we grew in the Womb.

~ Or we may as justly affirm, that we shall never Die, *though Thousands fall beside us, and Ten thousand at our Right hand*, because we are ignorant of the manner of our Dissolution, and cannot fully describe the divorce of the Soul from the Body. Psal. 91. 7.

This then is undoubtedly certain, that the Existence of a God is so clearly attested, that we cannot but believe it, unless we renounce our Reason.

But if we believe it just as we believe the Histories of Ancient Times, or the Descriptions of Distant Countries; if we think it concerns us no more than the Ages that we can never recall, or the Nations that we shall never behold; it would have been better for us, if we had never heard of the Name of God,
or

or were really Atheists in Opinion, as well as Practice. For,

Secondly, It will serve only to aggravate our Guilt, and sharpen our Punishment. It is as Rom. 10. 9. necessary to *Confess with our Mouth*, as to *Believe in our Heart*, that there is a God. But this necessary Profession of our Religion will certainly condemn us, unless it is confirm'd and enliven'd by our Practice. For it adds Hypocrisy to Sin; and the more we Boast of our Faith, so much the Louder our Sins will cry against us.

The speculative Atheist (if there is any such Person) hopes that there is no God, because he has affronted him. But the finfull Believer continues to affront him, though he knows that there is one. The former will not acknowledge him to be his Lord; but the latter calls him Lord, and then disobeys him. The former Acts without Principles; the latter Acts against them. And whilst one denies God's Being, the other tramples upon his Perfections.

We may behold a resemblance of the Atheist in the obstinate *Jews*, when they spoke the words of Ignorance and Contempt; John 9. 29. *for this Fellow we know not from whence he is.*

And we behold as lively a Resemblance of the finfull Believer in *the Soldiers of the Governour*, that *bow'd the Knee before Jesus*, and then *spit upon him, and smote him on the Head*. Mat. 27. 29, 30. Though he pretends to receive him as his

King,

King, yet he pays his Homage, by giving him *a Crown of Thorns*; and his specious declarations are no more than a solemn mockery.

If we lay his Words and Actions in the Balance together, and allow them to be of equal weight, yet even upon this favourable allowance, his Religion is reduc'd to nothing. For if his Words acknowledge God, his Actions absolutely deny him. But I fear that his Actions will prove to be of greater weight than his Words; and if those are Sins, they will render these also finfull.

He declares that God is Infinite in Knowledge, in Goodness, in Justice, and in Power. But yet he daily commits Abomination in the sight of him, who discerns *the Secrets of the Heart*, and observes the Rise, Progress, and Consummation of Sin.

He *lives, moves, and has his Being* through Acts 17.28. the Goodness of God, and (if you will believe his Professions) he is sensible of it; but yet he delights to grieve his Spirit, abuses the endearing Instances of his Loving-kindness, and wearies his Patience and Forbearance.

He boasts of being the Servant of a Just, and Righteous God; but yet he transgresses the eternal Rules of his Justice, and passes on from one degree of Iniquity to another.

He knows that there is a Great and Terrible God, whose Power is able to destroy him for ever and ever; and whose Vengeance he can neither escape, nor resist; and yet he trifles

trifles with the Almighty, and *treasures up*
 Rom. 2. 5. *wrath against the day of wrath.*

How vain and foolish is the Man that Imagines that the God of Wisdom will accept of his fruitless Professions!

While he Imagins this, he must also think, that his Knowledge is blinder than the Ignorance of Men, his Goodness a Fond and Foolish Pity, his Justice an Irresolute Weakness, and his Power an Insignificant Terrour, *bearing the Sword in vain.*

Though he says of him, as *Elijah* in derision did of *Baal*, *He is a God*, yet certainly it is only in derision. And while his Sins call for the Vengeance of God, he must impiously conceive, that *either he is Talking, or he is Pursuing, or he is in a Journey, or peradventure he Sleepeth, and must be awak'd.*

1 Kings
 18. 27.

His Faith is so far from extenuating his Guilt, that it renders it inexcusable. He *Believes, as the Devils* do, and he will also *Tremble with them.*

The Time will shortly come, when Pains and Diseases will take hold of him, and Death will set all its Terrours in array against him; Then his Sins will compass him about, and *make his Bed uneasy in his Sickness.* His False Professions will reproach him, and his Ineffectual Belief will upbraid him.

His Body will Quake like the Earth at the approaches of its Dissolution, *the Rock* of his Heart will be *Rent*, and the multitude of
 Vices

Vice
 arise
 B
 Stat
 and
 plac
 H
 ting
 atte
 in w
 Cha
 Pass
 T
 men
 ner
 rou
 pre
 as h
 H
 and
 to a
 con
 tor
 ble
 Be
 cia
 ing
 his
 str
 mi
 in

Vices that were buried in forgetfulness, will *arise and come forth.*

But behold him in a yet more miserable State, when the Trumpet calls to Judgment, and he is constrain'd to leave the dark Hiding-place of the Grave!

He will see the Judge of all the World *sitting on his Throne, and all the Host of Heaven* Rev. 20, 11, attending upon him. *The Books will be open'd* ^{12.} in which his Sins are recorded in everlasting Characters, and the Sentence ready to be Pass'd.

The very Heavens will be on Fire, and the Elements will melt with fervent Heat; 2 Pet. 3, 12. and the general Destruction will fill his Soul with Horror. The Ministers of Vengeance will stand prepar'd to seize their wretched Prey, as soon as he receives his eternal Doom.

How can he stand in that dreadful Day? and whither can he fly? He needs no Witness to accuse him, but himself; a Righteous Judge condemns him; and Legions of evil Spirits torment him. And now he *Believes and Trembles*, but in vain!

Let those consider this, who pretend to Believe, and yet *forget God*. Let those especially consider it, who triumph in Blaspheming the Living God, and glory in Profaning his Holy Name.

Let it be an Admonition to these industrious Agents of Satan, these inveterate Enemies of God and Goodness. They will find in *the Day of the Lord*, (and may they not find too

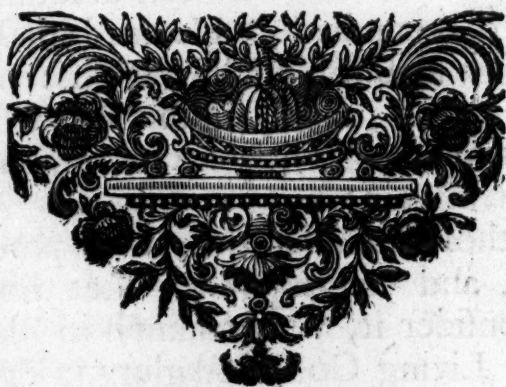
254 *The Necessity of shewing &c.*

too late) that their admir'd Cavils and Objections are *as Stubble*, but the Gospel of Christ is sufficiently tried, and will endure for ever.

Acts 2. 22,
23.

May they *repent of their Wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the Thoughts of their Heart may be forgiven them*. May they yet be sensible that *they are in the gall of Bitterness, and the bond of Iniquity*.

And let us beseech the compassionate Jesus, By his Agony, and Bloudy Sweat, By his Cross and Passion, and By his Precious Death, to deliver us from all blindness and hardness of Heart, from all False Doctrine, Heresy and Schism, and from all contempt of his Word and Commandment.



5 JY61

The

The A

S

Thoz

T

fight
the w
his T
Loyn
anoth

Th
Concu
Se

*The Hand-writing upon the Wall.*A
S E R M O NPREACH'D at
St. M A R T I N's
I N
O X F O R D.

Daniel V. 27

*Thou art weigh'd in the Ballances,
and art found wanting.*

THIS was one dreadfull part of the Interpretation of the Hand-writing upon the Wall in the Palace of *Belshazzar*, King of *Babylon*. At the sight of the hand which wrote upon the plaister of v. 5, 6. the wall, the King's Countenance was chang'd, and his Thoughts troubled him, so that the Joynts of his Loyns were loos'd, and his Knees smote one against another.

The King and his Princes, his Wives and his Dan. 5. 3.
Concubines were drinking in the Golden Vessels that
Serm. XIV. *were*

were taken out of the Temple which was at Jerusalem. They forgot to give Praise and Honour
 Dan. 4. 34. to him *that Liveth for ever and ever, whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and whose Kingdom is from Generation to Generation: and instead of the King of Heaven, all whose Works are Truth, and whose Ways are Judgment, and*
 v. 37. *who is able to abase all those that walk in Pride,*
 Dan. 5. 4. *they prais'd the God's of Gold and of Silver, of Brass, of Iron, of Wood, and of Stone.*

In the midst of this Luxury, this Ingratitude, this Idolatry, the same great and Terrible God, that had driven Nebuchadnezzar
 Dan. 4. 32, 36. *from Men, and forc'd him to eat Grass with the Ox, and afterwards restor'd him to his Glory, and establish'd him in his Kingdom,* was pleas'd to rebuke the Impious Belshazzar for neglecting the remarkable Admonition and Example that was set before him.

Dan. 5. 5. And *in the same Hour* in which he gave up himself to his sinfull Pleasures, and wantonly defied his Bountifull Benefactor, the Hand-writing strook a damp upon all his Enjoyments, and stirr'd up his Thoughts to perplex and accuse him.

Dan. 5. 8. There was no one present *that could read the Writing, or shew the Interpretation thereof;* but his Conscience told him, that it pointed to him, and chiefly concern'd himself. And he was *like a troubled Sea* till he sent for Daniel,
 v. 12. *in whom there was an excellent Spirit, and Knowledge, and Understanding, to shew the Interpretation.*

But

But the Faithfull *Daniel* could yield him no Relief; he could only confirm and explain the unacceptable Tidings, which his guilty Conscience, and his ill-boding Apprehension brought him.

He constrain'd him to reflect, though the reflection was grievous to him, *that when the Heart of his Father Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up, and his Mind was hardned in Pride, he was depos'd from his Kingly Throne, and they took his Glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of Men, and his Heart was made like the Beasts, and his Dwelling was with the wild Asses: they fed him with Grass like Oxen, and his Body was wet with the Dew of Heaven, till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the Kingdom of Men, and appointed over it whomsoever he would.* Dan. 5. 20, &c. And that he, his careless, and ungratefull Son, had not humbled his Heart, though he knew all this, and had not glorified the God, in whose hand his Breath was, and whose were all his ways.

Therefore (says he) *was the part of the hand sent from him; and this is the writing that was written. God hath numbred thy Kingdom, and finish'd it. Thou art weigh'd in the Balances, and found wanting. Thy Kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.*

What a shocking Consideration was this, that notwithstanding his Greatness and Power, he was found wanting; and that after he was stripp'd of all his Pomp and State, he would have nothing to recommend him to a Just and Righteous God, but would be call'd to give

an account of the Impious Abuse of his Important Trust!

This teaches us a very usefull Lesson; That there is a God that tries and searches the Heart, and weighs all our Actions in the Balance of impartial Justice; that *has no respect of Persons*, and does not esteem us for the multitude of things that we possess, or the splendor of any thing that is great; but principally regards the use that we make of his Bounty, and the degrees of our improvement in Righteousness and Virtue: And how much soever the glittering shew of Riches and Honour, may engage the Admiration of Mankind, yet Religion is of Infinitely greater Moment: without this, every thing that the World can bestow upon us, will not at all avail

Isa. 40. 15. *US: for in the sight of God, the Nations are as the drop of the Bucket, and are counted as the small Dust of the Balance; and he taketh up the Isles, as a very little thing; and all the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing without Religion.*

✕ This should incline us to remember that we are but sinfull Dust and Ashes, and whatsoever we are possess'd of, will add nothing to us, unless we use it to the Glory of God. We shall be *found wanting* even in the midst of those flattering Objects, that gratify our Pride, our Avarice, our Ambition. And when these are pass'd away, we shall become the most wretched, contemptible Creatures, and
be

be re
scour

If
Appr
feren
reco

If
we n
not b
guilt

Al
Welf
our
wher
ther

Fi

Se

T

F

emp
in hi
cum
pecu
tion
Sons

be rejected by God, as the Dregs and off-scouring of all things.

If therefore we have any regard to God's Approbation, we must give Religion the preference to every thing, since that alone will recommend us to his Favour.

If we value even our present Happiness, we must endeavour so to Live, that it may not be lessened by the severe Reflections of a guilty Conscience.

And if we have any concern for our future Welfare, we must make such a provision for our selves, as will be our stay and support, when all Earthly things are consumed. Let us therefore consider,

First, That we should employ the Talents which God has given us, in his Service, and to his Honour.

Secondly, That unless we make this Improvement of them, we cannot truly enjoy them in this World. And

Thirdly, That the abuse of them will rise in Judgment against us in the World which is to come. And

First, We are to consider, that we should employ the Talents which God has given us, in his Service, and to his Honour. The Circumstances of *Belshazzar* were indeed almost peculiar to himself; and amidst all the portions of Greatness which are allotted to the Sons of Men, there is hardly any that can

The Hand-writing

equal that measure of Riches, and height of Glory, which he profanely abus'd to the dishonour of his Maker.

But yet the fall of this great Man, is an admonition to us, in every condition of Life; and though our Stations are widely different, Rom. 15. 4. yet his case, as well as *all other things that were written aforetime, was written for our Learning.*

The lowest and the meanest of us, is possess'd of some Advantages, upon which he values himself; and did he value himself aright, he would endeavour to improve them to the Glory of the Authour, and giver of every Gift, and to the Happiness of his Immortal Soul.

For it is not to be imagin'd, that the God of Wisdom should furnish him with a Power of doing Good, for no end or purpose; and shed his Bounty upon his Creatures, only that they might *take their Pastime* in this World, and yield up themselves to trifling and vanity. Neither is it reasonable to suppose, that a Creature which is form'd for an endless duration, should regard no more than his present, transitory State, and look no farther than the immediate gratification of his idle, foolish, sinful Inclinations.

We may be assur'd, that *the Lord that gave* Mat. 25. 15. *his Servant five Talents*, expected that he should *Trade with the same, and make them other five Talents*; and that *he distributed to every Man according to his several Ability*, with a design that

that he should answer his kindness with a suitable return.

And if the sense of what we possess, or the prospect of more, can encourage us to do our Duty, certainly we shall strive to attain to God's future Favour, by expressing our Gratitude for his present Blessings.

For what can be more desirable than that commendation, *Well done thou Good and Faithfull Servant, thou hast been faithfull over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things, Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord?* Mat. 25. 23.

How wonderfull is the Goodness of God, that pours his Gifts upon us, that we may Qualify our selves for larger measures of his Bounty, by making a right use of them!

And how happy is the Man that uses them as the means of *letting his Light shine before Men, and Glorifying his Father which is in Heaven!* Mat. 5. 16.

With what Satisfaction will he look back upon his Past conduct, when he reaps an Eternal Inheritance from the prudent Improvement of uncertain Honours, and corruptible Riches!

And how shall we ever sufficiently applaud his Wisdom, who is Rich in Good Works, and delights chiefly to abound in Righteousness!

And I think it may not be improper for us, to consider the several Opportunities which Mankind enjoy of rendering their present Condition subservient to their future Interest.

For every one has a proper Sphere in which he is ordain'd to move, and in that he is capable of serving his Creator, of being beneficial to his Brethren, and of promoting the welfare of his own Soul.

Those in the highest Ranks and Fortunes have indeed the greatest Power, and like the Heavenly Bodies, may shed their kindly Influences upon those beneath them.

But we that are far below, may yet answer the important Purposes of an All-wise God; like the inferior Works of the Creation, none of which were made in vain.

And the Capacities of the Great are not unworthy our consideration, since they will raise a noble emulation in us, and excite our utmost Endeavours to reach after them.

How Large and Pleasant a Prospect is open'd to the Man, whom God has plac'd in an exalted Station, and entrusted with a plentiful share of the Blessings of this Life! He is able to assert the Cause of God, to promote Religion in a corrupt and degenerate Age, to recommend it to all his Dependents, to invite them into *the path of the Just* by the *Shining Light* of a good Example, and to discountenance Vice and Profaneness by his Authority. He can Act in the stead of God, and be *a Father to the Fatherless*, and maintain the *cause of the Widow*. He can raise a dejected Spirit, support a sinking Family, and come in, to their Relief in the critical Juncture, and guard against their approaching Calamity.

Prov. 4. 18.

mity. And in short, he can resemble God, in that belov'd Attribute, his Goodness, and at once copy after the Divine Nature, and enjoy the sincerest Pleasures of Humanity: for he can gratify every noble Desire, and answer the generous Purposes of Friendship.

The bare mention of his Power, and of the several Instances in which it can exert it self, is enough to transport every one that has any sense of Gratitude to God, any regard to Virtue, any value for that amiable Quality which bears the delightfull Name of Good-nature.

And I wish that all whom God has made the Stewards of his Bounty, would remember the End for which they receiv'd that important Trust; and that instead of prostituting his Gifts to Sin and Folly, and abusing them to their own and his Dishonour, they would employ them in the Service of God, and to the Advantage of their Country, their Friends, and their Immortal Souls.

And we ought not to envy them those Opportunities which they enjoy, and which we seem to want; for in the Lower conditions of Life, there are also means of doing Good; and if we are dispos'd to do it, we may pass our time of Sojourning here with Comfort and Satisfaction, and improve those Talents that are deliver'd to us, to the Honour of Religion, and to the great ends of Friendship and Charity.

And

And even those that are engag'd in the
 Ps. 104. 23. *Servile offices of Life, and go forth to their
 Work and Labour till the Evening*, may also de-
 dedicate themselves to the Service of God, and
 promote their own Interest, and the com-
 mon Welfare.

And the Man that begs for the Blessing of
 God upon all his Undertakings, and resolves
 to do Justice to every one, and to make an
 honest Provision for his Family, is an Object
 worthy of Admiration and Esteem; for the
 Holy Angels behold him with pleasure, and
 God himself looks down upon him with Ap-
 probation. He builds upon a Rock, and that
 Integrity which accompanies him through all
 his Labours, is a strong cement to preserve
 his small portion of Riches unshaken. He
 leaves a sure Inheritance to his Childrens
 Children; and provides one for himself, which
 Mat. 6. 20. *no Time can decay, no Moth nor Rust can
 corrupt.*

And when he comes before God, he will
 find that his honest Principles will stand him
 in greater stead, than all the Riches of this
 World could have done; and though he was
 not possess'd of those things, which are now
 thought the marks of Honour, yet he will be
 truly esteem'd in the sight of God, and he will
 not be *found wanting*.

How happily are Riches improv'd, when
 they are made instrumental to the business of
 Religion, and borrow a new Lustre from it,
 while they seem to give credit to it!

How

How commendable is the choice of the Man, that chooseth *the one Thing needfull*; and while he has every thing that is desirable in this Life, possesses that also which will be eternally valuable in the other!

And how Glorious also is the Man, who though he has no Pomp or State to attract the Eyes of the People, but is plac'd in the despis'd circumstances of Poverty, is yet adorn'd with those excellent Qualities, that will raise him to the highest Honour, and *give him a Name above every Name* that the World can give!

Religion therefore is the principal thing, and this is the end we ought to aim at, in all conditions of Life; For this will render us Happy in the Lowest state; and without this we cannot be Happy in the Highest.

And our present Interest obliges us to Dedicate the good things of this Life to the Service of Religion; for,

Secondly, Unless we make this Improvement of them, we cannot truly enjoy them in this World. Common Experience teaches us, that there is no Lasting Pleasure or Satisfaction to be found, in those flattering Objects that now surround us: after a little acquaintance with them, we begin to loath and despise them; and the continuance of those things which we at first admire, affords us nothing but weariness and vexation.

And

And if these Enjoyments are but uncertain in their best estate, and quickly give way to Disquiets and ungratefull Reflections; How vain and deceitfull are they, when the Mind is oppress'd with a Load of guilt, and the thoughts of Punishment are every moment striking a damp upon it! our Mirth is then forc'd and unnatural, and our Spirits are unable to keep up and support it.

And where can we find a Wretch so desperate, as to drink to the full of Pleasure, and have a true and lively relish of it, when he knows that the most dreadfull Dangers hang over him, and hang as it were by a single Hair; and that all his Happiness is held by the weakest tenure, even by the blast of Life, and is no more in his Power than *the shadow that departeth*?

Surely he must tremble at the thoughts of *the Hand-writing upon the Wall*, and his Heart cannot but tell him, that *for all these things which he fondly doats upon, God will bring him into Judgment.*

Eccles. 11.
9.

How irksom must it be to consider, that his Pleasures will shortly come to an end, and will be bitterness at the last; that the Riches which he spends in a course of Luxury, will aggravate his Guilt, and must be one day certainly accounted for; and that his neglected Soul will bring a heavy Accusation against him, in the time of its distress, and draw his sinfull Body into a participation of its Misery!

How

How deplorable is his Condition, when all his Enjoyments are short and transient, and the remembrance of them is disagreeable to him !

But on the other side, How pleasant is it so to use our Talents, as to be able to give a satisfactory account of them, and be assur'd that we have Laid them out to the Best advantage !

With what Confidence may the Rich man look up to God, when he knows that he has discharg'd his Trust, and dispens'd his Bounty according to the Will of his Lord and Master ! O

How does he delight to see the cause of Religion prosper in his hand, to observe the Happiness of those whom he has sav'd from perishing, to behold the young Plants that he has brought up, *flourishing like a Tree planted by the Water-side*, and to find that all his kind and friendly designs answer his expectation !

His Happiness is doubled by the delightfull view of that of others ; and when he thinks with himself, how widely he has spread the Blessings of Heaven, and how many he has made Partakers with him ; his Felicity is heightned at the sight of each of them, and his Joys increase and multiply.

And when he permits himself to enjoy his innocent Pleasures, and to use with chearfulness those good things which God has provided for him ; when he is rais'd to the highest degree of Happiness that can be deriv'd from any

The Hand-writing

any thing in this World; a surprizing satisfaction is darted in upon him, and his Heart is fill'd with the thought, that he has something much greater prepar'd for him in another World, and an Inheritance that will be securely his, when all Earthly Riches shall be no more.

And if there is any reason to fear the secret worm of a guilty Conscience, that preys upon and destroys the fairest appearance of Happiness; if we have any concern for our present Comfort and Welfare; we must so direct and govern all our Actions, that no unwelcome Reflection, no astonishing Fear may break in upon us; but we may have a true sense of those Pleasures that are now offer'd to us, and a certain prospect of those that are Infinitely better.

And if they that live in the abundance of all things, stand in need of the Comforts of Religion, and cannot but be Miserable without them; certainly they that have a smaller portion of the things of this World, are highly oblig'd, as they tender their own immediate Interest, to make Religion their choice; for this will sweeten their Labours, divert their Cares, and enable them to pass their painfull Life with chearfullness. ○

And whensoever the hardships of their narrow Circumstances, tempt them to complain of their Fortune, this will take them off from that ungratefull Subject, and enliven them with a chearfull expectation of attaining to
that

that
very
Gran
An
full o
their
much
Re
them
mean
to ris
of Son
ed, a
sion
It
rour,
them
Inter
quiet
done
An
them
profi
Day
to G
the
very
T
that
fake
last
they
whic

that glorious Place, in which they will far, very far excell the highest Pitch of Worldly Grandeur.

And therefore they should be always mindfull of their Eternal welfare, and not suffer their Less important Cares to encroach too much upon them.

✱ Religion is indeed very often excluded by them; but the pretence for it, will by no means excuse them; for *it is in vain for them to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the Bread of Sorrows*, if their Better part is still neglected, and the Soul has no share in the Provision which they are making. ○

It must necessarily strike them with Terror, to think that while they are wearying themselves from day to day, their Immortal Interest is utterly forgotten; that they *disturb themselves in vain*; and after all they have done, they shall be *found wanting*.

And yet how many are there, that give up themselves to Toil and Labour for that which profiteth not, and refuse to set apart One Day in Seven, or One Hour, for their Duty to God, lest they should take too much from the Time that is spent in a mercenary Slavery!

They are Ignorant and Indifferent as to that which most concerns them; and for the sake of a temporary Advantage, which will last but for a few Years, or a few Generations, they abandon and renounce that Happiness which is to endure for Ever.

Mi-

The Hand-writing

Miserable Men, that are regardless of their true Interest, and of the End for which they were Created!

† Neither the Cares nor the Pleasures of this Life should so engage our Thoughts, as to Lessen our Concern for our future Welfare. For our Powers were given us, that we might *work out our Salvation*; and unless we use them aright, the Abuse of them will,

Thirdly, Rise in Judgment against us in the World which is to come. We are now in a state of probation, and God has bestow'd his Gifts upon us, that we may improve them to our Eternal Advantage. He watches over and observes us; and is pleas'd when we answer the gracious Designs of his Loving-kindness.

The same All-seeing Eye that was witness to the Luxury and Profaneness of *Belshazzar*, and discern'd the Folly and Baseness of his ungratefull Heart, in the Night of his Feasting, is also present with us, and takes the strictest notice of all our Actions: and the same Terrible God that *sent forth the fingers of a Man's hand*, to write an Accusation against the King, and to record the Sentence that was pass'd against him, does also write down all the Circumstances of our Life, and preserve them in everlasting Characters. And in his Book is contain'd the most exact account of all the Gifts that we abuse, of all the Hours that we spend in Sin, and of all
the

the Admonitions of our Conscience, which fails not to admonish us, to make a better Improvement of our Time.

And though we now imagin that it is unworthy of our care, and wantonly throw away the Blessings of God, as if *we were born at all* Wild. 2. 2. *adventure: and should be hereafter as though we had never been; yet every idle Thought, Word and Action* will be brought to our Remembrance, and every mispent Hour will be charg'd upon us.

Come on (says the Epicure) *Let us enjoy the* v. 6. 9. *good things that are present: Let none of us go without his Part of our Voluptuousness: Let us leave Tokens of our Joyfullness in every place: for This is our Portion, and our Lot is this.*

But this *Portion* must be accounted for; and the use of this *Lot* will be mention'd to his Condemnation in the great Day of Recompence.

He is willing to Believe that *his Name will* v. 4. *be forgotten in time, and that no Man will have his Works in remembrance; that his Life will pass away as the trace of a Cloud: and be dispers'd as a Mist that is driven away with the Beams of the Sun, and overcome with the Heat thereof.*

But there is a God that distinctly knows how every moment of his Life is employ'd, and will present before him a true and faithfull Catalogue of his Sins: for they are counted by him, *who knows the way where Light dwell* Job 38. 19. *eth, and as for Darkness, where is the Place there-* 22. 37. *of; who has entred into the Treasures of the Snow,*
and

The Hand-writing

and seen the Treasures of the Hail; who numbers the Clouds in Wisdom, and the Rain as it falls to the ground, and the drops of Dew that refresh the Earth.

Sinfull Man may indeed for a time, put away the consideration of these things, and prevent reflection by a variety of Pleasures. Nay he may bid defiance to his Reason, and Sin on, in contempt of the ill-boding Fears, the dreadfull Admonitions, *the Hand-writing that comes forth* against him.

But though he refuses to *read the Writing*, or to hear the *Interpretation thereof*, yet it will at last be brought home to him; and when his Riches, his Honours, and his Pleasures have forsaken him; when he stands a poor wretched Soul, before the Judgment-seat of an angry God; those Actions which he never consider'd, will be *weigh'd in the Balances*, and he will be *found wanting*.

The Men that now swell with the Spoils of Nations, and ungratefully Triumph in their undeserv'd greatness; that despise the Poor and Fatherless, and rejoyce in the multitude of Riches, which they have gotten by falsehood and extortion, will be depriv'd of All their Glory, and of that vain shew with which they endeavour to cover their guilty Souls; and when they appear before a Righteous God, they will be found *Lighter than Vanity it self*; and their former Grandeur will serve only to encrease their Damnation.

The

Th
wond
of th
fount
grosse
Relig
luable
An
selves
and I
the th
ed by
made
The
Peasa
the P
only
Go
Happ
Might
make
the St
Poor
But th
vour;
which
them i
Wedd
Le
teous
more
sembl
Favor
Ser

The Wise and Learned that boast of their wonderfull Improvements, and in the pride of their Hearts, are forgetfull of God the fountain of Wisdom; will be charg'd with the grossest Folly, because they have neglected Religion, which is the only thing that is valuable in the sight of God.

And they that have entirely devoted themselves to this World, and suffer'd their Cares and Labours to engross their Time and stifle the thoughts of God, will be for ever reject-ed by him, and for ever lament that they made no provision for their Souls.

There is no respect of Persons with God. The Peasant will stand upon the same Levell with the Prince; and Virtue and Vice will be the only marks of Distinction. Rom. 2. 11.

God has invited us all to partake of his Happinefs. *He has call'd the Great and the Mighty.* But too many of them are ready to make excuse. *He has also sent his Servants into the Streets and Lanes of the City, to bring in the Poor and the Maim'd, the Halt and the Blind.* But they must Qualify themselves for his Favour; for though he regards not those things which engage our Admiration, yet he will cast them into utter Darknes if they have not on the Wedding-garment. Luke 14. 18, 21. Mat. 22. 12, 13.

Let us therefore put on the Robe of Righteousness, and endeavour to grow more and more into the Likeness of God. For to resemble him is the highest Honour, and his Favour is preferable to the greatest Riches.

Let us Adorn our Station with *the Beauty of Holiness*; and let Religion be our chief care, in whatsoever State the Providence of God shall place us. If we should possess an abundance of Earthly things, Let us still remember that we have a better Inheritance, an Inheritance of infinitely greater value than all the Treasures of the World. And if Poverty should be thought most proper for us, Let us still resolve to do our Duty; for this will support us in this uncertain Life, and enable us to bear the want of those things, which God in his Wisdom has denied us.

Let us study to attain to Perfection by the Practice of Virtue, which will be allways of sufficient weight and value, and recommend us to Men and Angels, by its Intrinick worth and Excellence; and to God, through the Merits of our Redeemer.

Mal. 4. 2. The Pleasures of Life will pass away, and the Time will come, when we shall not be capable of enjoying them. The glittering shew of Honour will fade away *when the Sun of Righteousness appears*. And our beloved Riches *will melt like Wax at the Presence of the Lord*. But Virtue will *shine forth in its full strength*, and receive the eternal Approbation of God.

The

S

O

An

w
B

A

Should
old,
Should
Ser

*The Lamb that was provided for
a Burnt-offering.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
U N I V E R S I T Y

O F
O X F O R D,

At St MARY'S.

Gen. XXII. 8.

*And Abraham said, My Son, God
will provide himself a Lamb for a
Burnt-offering.*

ALMIGHTY God who is wonder-
full in his Doings towards the Child-
ren of Men, was pleas'd to give his
Promise to *Abraham*, that *a Child* Gen. 17. 17.
should be born to him that was an hundred years
old, and that Sarah who was ninety years old
should bear. And he brought him forth abroad; Gen. 17. 5.

Serm. XV.

S 2

and

276 *The Lamb that was provided*

and said, *Look now towards Heaven, and tell the Stars, if thou be able to number them: And he said unto him, so shall thy Seed be. And he believ'd in the Lord, knowing that what was impossible with Men, was possible with God. And he counted it to him for Righteousness.*

Gen. 15. 6. Rom. 4. 5.

After that he had shewn this remarkable Proof of his Faith, and Isaac was Born unto him; the God that rais'd him up a Son, thought fit in his infinite Wisdom, to make a greater Trial of him. And he said, *Take now thy Son, thine only Son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the Land of Moriah: and offer him there upon one of the Mountains which I will tell thee of.*

Gen. 22. 2.

This severe Command was deliver'd with all the Circumstances that could move a Father's Pity, and incline him to refuse a Compliance with it. For He call'd him his Son; and as if that were not sufficient to discourage him from taking away his Life, he endear'd him farther to him, by calling him, his *only Son*; and when he had stirr'd up all his tender Affections, he then bid him deliver up him whom he Lov'd, and Sacrifice Isaac, the staff, the comfort, and the delight of his Old Age.

But how could he Perform so harsh, so unpleasant a Duty, which seem'd to cancell the Promises of God, and to blast all his hopes of the Blessings that were to descend upon his Seed after him.

Yet we find no reluctance in the Faithfull Abraham, no repining thought, no expression of complaint. For he rose up early in the Morn-

v. 3.

ing,

ing, and saddled his Afs, and took two Young men with him, and Isaac his Son, and clave the Wood for the Burnt-offering, and rose up and went to the Place, of which God had told him. Then on the Third day, Abraham lift up his Eyes, and saw the Place afar off. But the sight of it did not discourage him; neither did he betray his Design by any appearance of concern.

v. 2.

And he said to his Young men, Abide you here, and I and the Lad will go yonder and Worship, and come again to you. It is probable that he might leave them there, lest they should be shock'd at this extraordinary Sacrifice, and endeavour to withdraw him from his Resolution by the Arguments of Compassion.

Gen. 22. 5.

And yet when he had left them there, and had no Person to Converse with but Isaac, no one to divert his Thoughts, it is natural to conclude, that his Heart should be turn'd within him, and the lovely Object should melt him into Tears.

But instead of this, he took the Wood of the Burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his Son; and he took the Fire in his hand, and a Knife: and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his Father, and said, My Father: and he said, Here am I my Son. And he said, Behold the Fire and Wood; but where is the Lamb for a Burnt-offering?

v. 6, 7.

This Innocent curiosity must necessarily touch him to the Quick, and enter even into his Soul. How could he answer this startling Question? Surely it was enough to soften him in-

278 *The Lamb that was provided*

to Pity; and almost enough to prevail even with *Abraham* to disobey his God.

But he continues unmoveable, and bravely
Gen. 22. 8. answers, *My Son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-offering.*

This he spoke with respect to that very Sacrifice which God commanded him to offer. But it was in some measure also fulfill'd, when
v. 11, 12, 13. *the Angel of the Lord call'd to him out of Heaven, and said, Lay not thine hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me. And Abraham lifted up his Eyes, and look'd, and behold behind him a Ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the Ram, and offer'd him up for a Burnt-offering, in the stead of his Son.*

But the words of *Abraham* seem also to be Prophetical of the most stupendous instance of Mercy, that ever was vouchsaf'd to Mankind. When the Sons of Men had provok'd the Wrath of God, and labour'd under the sense of Guilt, and the fears of Vengeance; when they knew not whom to flee unto for Succour, or how to make an Attonement; it must transport them into an ecstasy of Joy and Admiration, to hear that God would *provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-offering.*

But who could presume to hope for it? or whence could we expect so gracious a Promise? And yet God has actually done this; and when no one in the whole created World, was able to satisfy the Divine Justice, our of-
 fended

fende
 propit

No
 ham's
 pres
 himse

of Sir

Ho

Good

this f

he lov

only

Th

fion u

our C

Fi

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

Se

fended God accepted of his only Son, as a *propitiation* for us.

No Thought can reach the height of *Abraham's* Obedience, no Tongue can justly express its Glory; for in the Judgment of God himself, it was the most distinguishing proof of Sincerity that could be given.

How then can we ever sufficiently adore the Goodness of God, which infinitely excels even this signal Action? *Now certainly we know that he loves us, seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son from us.*

That This may for ever make an Impression upon us, and effectually engage us to shew our Gratitude; Let us consider,

First, That none of the Children of Men, none of the Angels of God could Atoné for us.

Secondly, That we had no reason to hope for Mercy, but the greatest reason to expect the sad effects of his eternal Displeasure. And

Thirdly, That he was yet pleas'd to have Compassion upon us, and to *provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-offering.* And

First, That none of the Children of Men, none of the Angels of God could Atoné for us. It was impossible that any of our Brethren should help us, because we were *all concluded* Gal. 3. 22. *under Sin*, and every Son of *Adam* had receiv'd the Sentence of Condemnation. *For by one* Rom. 5. 12. *Man*

280 *The Lamb that was provided*

Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death pass'd upon all Men, for that all have sinn'd.

When our common Parent stood in the Innocence and Perfection of his Nature, he could not pretend to pay the immense Debt that he ow'd to his Creatour. Though it had been the whole Business of his Life to please him, and to Devote all his glorious Faculties to his Service, while they were capable of performing it in the most acceptable manner; yet his Obligations would still have surpass'd his Endeavours, and been infinitely more than the most active diligence could answer.

For he receiv'd his pure and untainted Happiness from God, and was indebted to him for every moment of his Life, while it was the most valuable, the most delightfull Blessing.

And those Capacities which enabled him to do his Duty still added to it, and the Power of serving *the King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, was it self an obligation that could never be discharg'd.

And if Man in his best Estate was unable to pay the Debt that was laid upon him, by the Goodness of God; how much less could he satisfy the Divine Justice, when that Goodness was abus'd? How much less could he blot out a World of Iniquity, and atone for the Sins of Men, which were *more than the Stars of Heaven, and the Sand which is upon the Sea Shore?*

There

The
stance
the c
made h
put all
knew
into hi
that he
ed R
vouch
him, a
wond
look g
perfec

Ho
him,
his N
more
eth up

Wh
with
Iniqu
whom
from
himse
and v
Being
folly?

Ma
Offer
his D
out a

There was a vast and inconceivable Distance between the Majesty of God, and Man the chief of his Earthly Creatures. Tho' he *made him but a little lower than the Angels, and put all things in Subjection under his Feet*, yet he knew that he was as nothing, till he *breath'd into him the Breath of Life; and he remembred that he was but Dust*. And even in that exalted Rank and Station in which his Maker vouchsaf'd to place him, he was far beneath him, and unworthy of his regard. And it was wonderfull condescension in the Almighty to look graciously upon him, and accept his most perfect Obedience. Psal. 8. 6.

How then could sinfull Man appear before him, when he was fallen from the dignity of his Nature by his own Folly, and rendred more contemptible than the Worm that crawl-eth upon the Ground?

When vile Dust and Ashes were cover'd with the disgrace of Guilt, and defil'd with Iniquity, How could Man look up to God whom he had endeavour'd to put far away from him? What could he offer in behalf of himself, to him who loath'd the sight of him, and who so much excells the most glorious Beings, that *he charges even his Angels with folly?* Job 4. 18.

Man could not conceive how heinous his Offences were, nor guess at the greatness of his Demerit; surely then he could not find out a Sacrifice proportionable to our Guilt;
he

he could not reconcile our God to us, when even his Sacrifice must be *an Abomination*.

The best Actions of the best of Men, are charg'd with such an allay of Infirmities, that they cannot claim a Reward, they cannot be thought worthy of Pardon. And were the most Faithfull Servant of God, to endeavour to atone for his own Offences, he must necessarily break forth in the words of despair,
 2 Cor. 2. 16. *Who is sufficient for these things?* The sight of his Transgressions would dismay him, and he would say with wonder and astonishment, *How*
 Ps. 139. 17. *great is the sum of them!*

Where then could we find the Man that
 Isai. 53. 4. *could bear our Grievs and carry our Sorrows*, that
 11. *could Justify many by his Righteousness*, and endure the heavy weight of our Iniquities?

Let us then look up to those *ministring Spirits* that attend upon *the Lord of Glory*. Those kind and amiable Beings could not but behold our deplorable case with Compassion; for their Breasts are continually inflam'd with the principles of Love and Charity. And when we were tied and bound with the chains of our Sins, they might wish that we could *do the Will of our Father on Earth, as it is done in Heaven*. But they were unable to rescue us from the depth of Misery.

For all that they could perform, was but the work of a Creature; and no finite, limited, imperfect Being could expiate our Sins which were committed against God, who is infinitely Just and Holy.

And

And they also have a Debt to pay, which will always increase, as they endeavour to discharge it; for that Goodness which gave them a Place in the presence of God can never be fully acknowledg'd, though they praise him *as with the voice of many Waters, and as with the voice of mighty Thunderings.* Though they repeat their Hallelujahs for *Ten thousand times Ten thousand, and Thousands of Thousands* of Ages, yet they will eternally have reason to repeat them. And though they call upon *every* Rev. 5. 13. *Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, to say, Blessing, Honour, Glory, and Power to him that sits on the Throne for ever and ever,* yet they cannot express the greatness of their Obligation. And their Services would still be too little to equal it, though *every thing that had Breath* should speak their Praises to God.

They could not therefore excuse our Disobedience, since it is their Duty, as well as their Reward, to perform every act of Obedience.

They could not make our Peace with God; they could only be *the Messengers of Peace.*

They could not be our Deliverers; it was enough for them to *Proclaim the glad Tidings* of our Deliverance.

They *rejoyce at our Conversion*; but it was not Luke 15. in their Power to prevail with God, that our Repentance might be accepted.

They can only admire the Wisdom of God's Dispensations; but the means of our Re-

284 *The Lamb that was provided*

Redemption were even to them *past finding out.*

Heb. i. 14.

They are willing to *Minister for them who are Heirs of Salvation*: But he alone could procure it for us, who is ador'd by *Legions of Angels*, and is *far above all Principality, and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is nam'd not only in this World, but in that which is to come.* And,

Eph. i. 21.

Secondly, We had no reason to hope for this Mercy from God, but the greatest reason to expect the sad effects of his eternal Displeasure. We have seen that no Creature was able to atone for us. For the Angels could only perform their necessary Duty. And the most Perfect of Men could not offer a sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of others, since he must also *offer for his own*, and even for them alone he could not make an equal Oblation.

There was then no Help for us, but in the Almighty. But how could we dare to ask for his Help? or who could presume so far, as to expect to find an Advocate in the Person offended?

Isa. 63. 15.

The Lord and giver of Life was pleas'd to look down from the *Habitation of his Holiness*, and to bring a World of Creatures into Being, that he might render them Partakers of his Happiness. He was infinitely and unspeakably Blessed in himself; and it was purely for their sakes, that *he spoke the word, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created.* He de-

Psalm. 148. 5.

lighted

lighted to see the over-flowings of his Goodness descend upon them. But they could add nothing to his perfect Bliss, no more than they could *add one Cubit to their own Stature.* Mat. 6. 27.

And he was most especially *mindfull of Man*; he endued him with noble Priviledges, gave him every thing that might conduce to his Pleasure and Enjoyment, and enabled him to Imitate the Glorious God that made him.

And when he had done all this, he requir'd but one easy Condition of him. *And if he had* 2 Kings 5. *bid him do some great thing should he not have done* 13. *it; How much rather then when he only commanded him not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; the tasting of which would give him the fatal knowledge of Sin, and acquaint him with Misery?*

But foolish Man disobey'd his God, and hearken'd to the pernicious Insinuations of his malicious Enemy, instead of following the Advice of his Friend and Benefactor. And his sinfull Posterity multiplied their Provocations against him, and even tried to weary his Patience and Long-suffering.

And was it not enough that he took us out of the dust of the Earth, and form'd us after the Image of himself, and plac'd us in a State of Happiness, when he stood not in need of our Welfare?

When we were fallen from the Station that he had assign'd us, and had abus'd the good things that he had pour'd down upon us; we our selves must think it Just, that he should
turn

286 *The Lamb that was provided*

turn away his Eyes from us with Abhorrence, and leave us to inherit our chosen Misery.

He gave us our Being, and that was an Act of Goodness which we could never deserve: much less could we hope that he would deliver us from our wretched Condition; much less that he should raise us to a higher degree of Happiness.

We were not worthy of the least of all his Favours when he first bestow'd them upon us. We were certainly unworthy of his Mercies, Acts 17. 23. when we had affronted him, *in whom we live, move, and have our Being.*

We could not but allow that the Sentence of Death ought to be pronounc'd against us; How then could we imagin that the God of Heaven and Earth should bid his sinfull Creatures Live?

If we directed our Thoughts towards him, we could not bear to think of his Perfections, and of the number of our Transgressions. Who then could plead with him, *to whom Vengeance belongs?* who could appear before *a Consuming Fire?*

If we consider'd his Goodness, even that amiable Attribute must have fill'd us with Confusion, and pierc'd us through with many Sorrows, at the remembrance of our Ingratitude.

If we reflected upon his Mercy, we must for ever have condemn'd our selves, for provoking so kind and compassionate a Being, to wrath and Indignation. And we could not have look'd towards *the throne of Grace*, or ever

ever h
and fi

If w
must
vain e

His
us cor
Light
than t

Th
been
tion.

shock
us do
of the
potent

teous
Heav

all th
vist t
tions

when
think
conce

his Ju
It

of H
sinful
trive

Good
impa
punis

full,
ever

ever have hop'd that we should *obtain Mercy*, Heb. 4. 16.
and *find Grace to help in time of need.*

If we had meditated upon his Wisdom, we must have endeavour'd to fly from him, in vain endeavour'd to conceal our Folly.

His Purity and Holiness would have made us conclude that he would never *shew us the* Hab. 1. 13.
Light of his Countenance, since he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.

The consideration of his Justice must have been as Terrible as the Sentence of Damnation. And his Almighty Power must have shock'd every Faculty of our Souls, and cast us down with Amazement, at the expectation of the dreadful coming of *the Lord God Omnipotent*, and the solemn appearance of the Righteous Judge. For *Behold the Heaven, and the* Ecc'us 16.
Heaven of Heavens, the Deep, and the Earth, and 18, 19, 20,
all that therein is, shall be mov'd, when he shall 22.
visit them. The Mountains also, and the foundations of the Earth shall be shaken with trembling, when the Lord looketh upon them. No Heart can think of these things worthily; and who is able to conceive his ways? who can declare the Works of his Justice? or who can endure them?

It must then be inconceivable that the God of Holiness should ever be reconcil'd to his sinfull Creatures; that his Wisdom should contrive the means of our Redemption; that his Goodness should prevail with his strict and impartial Justice to withhold its hand from punishing us; that he himself should make a full, perfect, and sufficient Satisfaction for us,
and

288 *The Lamb that was provided*

and employ his Infinite Power, in bringing us to Eternal Happiness, instead of rejoicing in our Destruction. And yet,

Thirdly, He was pleas'd to have compassion upon us, and to provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-offering. Behold an instance of Mercy which exceeds the largest Hopes, and the highest Expectation of all Nations and Ages; which surpasses even the Capacities of Angels; which they will for ever *desire to look into* with Admiration; and which will engage the Thoughts of all the Company of Heaven, and be the Subject of their Praises to all Eternity!

When Rebellious Man was irrecoverably Lost, unless a Sacrifice could be offer'd, that was equal to his Sins; and no one could be found that was able to undertake that important Work: in the midst of our fear and perplexity, God whom we had provok'd to consume us, and to visit us in the fierceness of his Anger, and with the Terrours of his Vengeance, condescended to plead the Cause of Man, to interpose in his Behalf, and to suffer the Punishment that was due to his Sins.

The Almighty Father spar'd not his only Begotten Son, but freely gave him up as a Sacrifice for his Enemies. To repair the Ruins of our corrupted Nature, he vouchsaf'd to take it upon him, and united the Infirmities of our Flesh, to that Perfect Being, *in whom there is all Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion.* And

And
Holy
cent J
there n
lefacto

For
be wou
our Ini
we ha
Lord l

And
to suff
from M

Wh
it cou
gratefu
rent, a

But
vail up
this su
the Pe
God,
ther's
cular
stand t
giver,
Friend
stretch
Isaac,
give h
he had
have s
hath ta
Sern

And to make our Peace with a Just and Holy God, *the Lamb without spot*, the Innocent Jesus, *who did no Sin, and in whose Mouth there was found no Guile*; was treated as a Malefactor, *and numbred with the Transgressors.* 1 Pet. 1. 19. 1 Pet. 2. 22. Isa. 53. 12.

For it was the will of God, that he should be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities. *All we like Sheep had gone astray: we had turn'd every one to his own way, and the Lord laid upon him the Iniquity of us all.* v. 5, 6.

And he rejoiced to do the will of God, and to suffer the sharpest Tortures, to rescue us from Misery.

When Abraham went to offer up his Son, it could not but be a very difficult and ungratefull Task, highly disagreeable to a Parent, and shocking to Nature.

But yet there were several Reasons to prevail upon him, and incline his Heart towards this surprizing Instance of his Obedience. For the Person that requir'd it of him, was his God, that had call'd him out from his Father's House, and distinguish'd him by a peculiar care. And he could not dare to withstand the Authority of God the supreme Lawgiver, or refuse to comply with his Almighty Friend. And he was convinc'd that should he stretch forth his Hand to slay his Beloved Isaac, he could yet raise him up a Son, and give him a numerous Posterity. And even if he had come to the last extremity, he might have said with Job, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Job 1. 21.

290 *The Lamb that was provided*

But the God of Mercy and Compassion, had nothing to move him to deliver up his only Son for us, but his own Infinite Goodness: for we were the Works of his Hands, and yet had griev'd him with our Iniquities: we were vastly Inferior to Him in our first Estate, and it was great Condescension in him, even then to Look down upon us. But we were become the most odious and ungratefull of Creatures, sunk into the depth of Sin, and cover'd with Pollution. We were engag'd in the Service of his Enemies, and took delight in shewing an Inveterate Hatred to the Authour of our Being.

And he might have commanded us into Destruction, and consum'd us with the rebuke of his Countenance. For when *the Lord cometh forth out of his Place, the Mountains shall be molten under him, and the Valleys shall be cleft: as Wax before the Fire, and as the Waters that are pour'd down a steep place.*

But he remembred Mercy, and sent the Blessed *Jesus* the Son of his Love, to pass through all the unhappy Circumstances of a wretched Life, and to endure the Agonies of a Thousand Deaths, that *Rebellious Man* might not Die Eternally, and that he might Live for Ever.

When *Isaac* went with *Abraham* unto the place of which God had told him, he knew not that his Life was requir'd. His Father indeed laid the Wood of the Burnt-offering upon him; but he was ignorant of his Design, and therefore

ask'd

ask'd h
offering

But
World
step th
ties tha
Stable,
vary.

Treatr
perver
the wo
Intoler
be mir
it were
under

And
and ch
of Sinn
was af
crifice.

Let
the Su
flam'd
folv'd
factor.

Let
gag'd
in Pra

Beh
ver'd h
pend
all thin
for hin

ask'd him, *Where is the Lamb for the Burnt-offering?*

But when the Son of God came into the World, he was fully acquainted with every step that he should take, and all the Indignities that he should suffer, from his Birth in a Stable, to his Crucifixion upon Mount Calvary. He saw the Barbarous and Mercyless Treatment that he should receive from the perverse and ungratefull *Jews*; He knew that the weight of his Father's Wrath would be Intolerable; that the most *Bitter Cup* would be mingled for him, and he should *Sweat as* Luk. 22. 44. *it were great drops of Bloud falling to the Ground,* under the Burthen of our Sins.

And yet he readily took them upon him, and chearfully consented to suffer for a World of Sinners. And he bore the Cross, when he was assur'd, that he himself should be the Sacrifice.

Let this astonishing Act of Goodness be the Subject of our Meditation, till we are inflam'd with a gratefull Sense of it, and are resolv'd to devote our Life to our great Benefactor.

Let us think of God's Love till it has engag'd our Souls, and rais'd them to Heaven in Praise and Thanksgiving.

Behold God *spar'd not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all*; and we may now depend upon it, that *he will also freely give us all things*. And can we refuse to do any thing for him? shall we not offer every thing that is

in our Power, and wish that we could offer infinitely more?

Let us consider the Danger, as well as the Baseness of our Ingratitude. When God has provided himself a Lamb for a Burnt-offering; if we render even this ineffectual; if we will not yet be sav'd from our Iniquities; *there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, But a certain fearfull looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.*

But let us be no longer Adversaries to God. If we yet turn to him, *he will remember our Sins, and our Iniquities no more.* For Christ was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many; and if we look for him in Righteousness, *he will appear to us the second time, without Sin, unto Salvation.*



5 JY61

The

Serm

The Centurion's Faith and Humility.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY
O F

O X F O R D,

At St. M A R Y'S.

Mat. VIII. 8.

*The Centurion answer'd and said,
Lord, I am not worthy that thou
shouldst come under my Roof: But
speak the word only, and my Ser-
vant shall be Healed.*

THE Remarkable Testimony that was
given to the Faith of the Centu-
rion; and the Divine Character of
the Person that gave it, naturally

Serm. XVI.

T 3

excite

excite our Curiosity, and lead us to inquire into the Circumstances that attended it.

The Authority of our Saviour indeed demands our Concurrence with his Testimony; and were there no other Proof of the Centurion's Faith, it would be enough to determine our Belief, that the God of Truth has pass'd
 Mat. 8. 10. this Judgment upon it, *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel.*

But since the particular Circumstances of it are recorded in the Gospel, and *written for our Admonition*, we are oblig'd by Duty, and mov'd by Inclination, to take a distinct Survey of so extraordinary a Case, and improve it to its proper use, by serious consideration.

The Person that address'd himself to our Saviour, was a *Roman* Centurion, and therefore unlikely to Believe in *the Lord of Life*, who was rejected with scorn, by his Own Peculiar People.

His Employment was such, as would rather indispose him to attend to the mighty Works of God, than dispose him to receive a Religious Impression from them.

And his Authority so great, that it might probably lift him up with vain Thoughts of himself, and make him disdain either to perform the offices of Humanity, or accept of them, with a Gratefull and Humble Spirit.

Mat. 8. 9. Yet this mighty Man who *had Soldiers under him*; and who describ'd his Power in the following manner, *I say to this Man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh:*

and

*and to
Absolu
compa
vant;
did no
lief, bu
imme*

*And
Gods
the A
the eve*

*He
to hin
mann
the w
Lord,*

griev

*An
plaint
tion
turn'
him.*

*An
of th
the M
rejoy*

*But
not
him;
ing,
there
being
thou*

and to my Servant, Do this, and he doth it: This Absolute Commander was touch'd with a compassionate sence of the Miseries of his Servant; and did not only desire to Relieve him, did not only send Messengers to procure Relief, but vouchsaf'd to go himself to obtain an immediate Cure for him.

And whither did he go? not to the vain Gods of the Heathen, but to *the God of Israel*, the Authour and giver of Life and Health, *the ever Blessed Jesus.*

He thought himself unworthy even to go to him, but at length he came in an Humble manner, *Beseeching him*, and breathing forth the words of Tenderness and Pity, *saying, Lord, my Servant lieth at home sick of the Palsie, grievously tormented.* Mat. 8. 5, 6.

And as soon as he had utter'd his Complaint, even before he could deliver a Petition for Redress, the Compassionate *Jesus* return'd answer to him, *I will come and Heal him.*

And now we might Judge from the Practice of the World, that he should readily embrace the Mercy that was offer'd, and *go on his way rejoicing.*

But such was his Humility, that he could not suffer our Lord to condescend so far to him; he thought himself incapable of receiving, so large and unlimited a Favour; and therefore desir'd to receive it but in part, being abundantly thankfull for the Cure, though it was wrought at a distance, without the

the additional Obligation of our Saviour's coming to visit him.

Mat. 8. 8.

Lord (says he) I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my Roof: But speak the word only, and my Servant shall be heal'd.

This express'd the fullest sense of the greatness of God, and the unworthiness of Man; and with this just Judgment of both, it also express'd a firm Belief of the Power, and an entire Confidence in the Goodness of our Lord. He was perswaded that no Distance was out of the reach of his Power, no Place beyond the extensive Influence of his Goodness. And though he could not deserve the Least of his Mercies, though he could not presume to entertain *so Divine a Person under his Roof*; yet he knew that since it was his good Pleasure, his Servant would be heal'd.

Others press'd through the Crowd, and let down their Sick into his Presence from the tops of their Houses, and hop'd to obtain Relief, if they *could but touch the hem of his Garment.*

But the Centurion desir'd no more than to hear the word of his Power, being assur'd that it would speak his Servant into perfect Health.

Do we not therefore Marvell with the Blessed *Jesus*, and give our immediate Assent to that remarkable Testimony, *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel?*

The glorious Qualifications that attended and distinguish'd it, were an humble Sense of his

his own
of the
fidence

Each
it is in
a mutu
whethe
we sha
God t
to rece
me the
lificatio

Fir
thiness
ledge
ing th
ignora
of infi
we all
if we a

For
an im
rise be
sent it
we are
that w
ten w
therein

If v
be fer
aggra
tirely

his own Unworthiness, an awefull Reverence of the Divine Majesty, and an entire Confidence in the Power and Goodness of God.

Each of these deserves to be consider'd as it is in it self; and All of them, as they have a mutual Influence upon one another. And whether we view them separately or joyntly, we shall find that they incline the Mercy of God to give us his Blessings, and dispose us to receive them with a thankfull Mind. Let me therefore recommend each of these Qualifications to you. And

First, An humble sense of our own Unworthiness; which naturally flows from the knowledge of our selves. We boast in vain of knowing the greater World without us, if we are ignorant of the lesser World within, which is of infinitely more Concernment to us. And we also boast in vain of knowing our selves, if we are ignorant of our Unworthiness.

For if we look into our Breasts with an impartial Eye, our Guilt and Shame will rise before us; and no other Object can present it self to our view. The State into which we are fallen by Sin, is like *the Roll of the Book* Ezek. 2. 9, *that was spread before the Prophet; it was written within and without, and there was written therein, Lamentations, and Mourning, and Woe.* ^{10.}

If we are sensible of any thing, we must be sensible of our Wretchedness, with this aggravating Circumstance, that we have entirely deserv'd it.

And

And if we presume to hope for Mercy, there is no encouragement from our selves to hope for it; we can only be assur'd, that we can never deserve it.

It is indeed too true, that we often entertain a different Opinion, and are possess'd with other Thoughts of our Case. And tho' *Pride was not made for Men*, yet it is grown familiar to us: it easily takes root in our Hearts; *and tho' its Seed be the least of all Seeds, it spreads it self over us*, and *so wide is the shadow* of it, that it covers all our Vices and Imperfections from our sight.

But there is no ground in Nature or Reason for it; no real Excellence to support our flattering Opinion. Our Imagination tells us, There is, and we willingly believe the pleasing Report of that *Lying Spirit*; and our deluded Eye forms in it self the beautifull colours of pretended Virtue, and then admires them.

But we *know nothing yet, as we ought to know*, unless we are acquainted with our Unworthiness. If we survey our corrupted Body, *It is there; if we go down into the depth of our Soul, It is there also*.

Our Body is in every part, a distinct Instrument of Sin; and it suffers the Consequences of it, in every part.

Our Reason gives but a feeble, glimmering Light, and is often misled by the blind Affections, and often proves a Treacherous guide to them.

Our

Our Will is bent towards Evil, and its byasfs is always turn'd to the paths of Sin.

Our violent Passions distract us with contrary Commands, and urge us on to different kinds of Mischief, all equally pursuing our Destruction, though differing in the methods of Destroying.

And our Affections bind us down to the Earth, and cleave to Objects viler than the Dust from whence we were taken.

This is our unhappy State, since our natural Faculties have been wasted with the spreading Deluge of Sin: and these are the Ruins of that once Glorious Creature, which is now so much defac'd, that it is almost as hard to conjecture what it was before it fell, as what it will be, when it rises again.

And the greatness of our *First Estate*, instead of justifying our Pride, mortifies and rebukes it. For when we look back upon our past Perfections, and behold them even thro' a Magnifying glafs, the higher they rise in our Esteem, so much the lower must our present Condition appear, and so much plainer the Folly and Guilt of our shamefull Fall.

If our Reason was (as most certainly it was) a Stream that flow'd from *the Fountain of Light*, we cannot but wonder at, and condemn its choice, by which it embrac'd Misery & Death, and wandred into the paths of Darknes.

If our Will was once a direct Rule of Action, agreeable to the Will of God, and drawn in an even Line, by his infinite Justice;
How

How contrary to it self is it now! and how Deform'd, winding into every crooked way, and lost in the maze of Sin!

If our Passions and Affections were an Heavenly Flame, and created to *ascend for ever and ever*, as Pure and Holy *Incense* to their Glorious Creatour, and like *the Lamps that burn before his Throne*; Alas! how are they degenerated! what improper Objects are they fix'd upon! and how far do they descend! They descend like the Smoke of a rejected Sacrifice, or the Vapour that rises from the Earth, and is so heavily laden with Pollution, as to return immediately to it again.

Such is our Unworthiness, that we could never deserve the Mercies of God: even before we had provok'd his Wrath, we could not pretend to merit his Favour.

At the instant of our First Parents Creation, before he had forfeited the Love of God; All that he was, and All that he enjoy'd, was the free and voluntary Gift of his Bounty. And as soon as he came into Being, he could not but wonder at the Goodness of his Maker, in calling Dust and Ashes into Life, and breathing a reasonable Soul into his Earthly Body.

And compounded, as he was, of Soul and Body, he could find no Virtue proceed from that surprizing Union, that was fit to be rewarded with the Happiness of Heaven: a few moments Life was beyond his deserts; and though he had never Sinn'd, yet an abundant

Grace

Grace
Creat
Ever

An
Blessin
Unwo
fences
Tran

Let
Take
action
to be
Sum
thing

Th
Mercy
Mercy

An
Creat
to vou
gratef
he has
we stil
in our
can th
Adora
nities,
Good.

Lor
with
gratef
the In
Mercy

Grace had been shed upon him, in forming a Creature, that was *but of Yesterday*, to live for Ever.

And if we were Unworthy of the Divine Blessings, before we had offended God; How Unworthy are we, in the midst of our Offences, and since we are compass'd about with Transgressions!

Let the most Innocent of the Sons of Men, *Take his Bill, and write down* every Virtuous action of his Life; yet there will be no Merit to be plac'd at the foot of his Account; the Sum total of his Deserts will amount to nothing but Misery.

This was the only Motive that inclin'd the Mercy of God to Redeem us; or rather his Mercy had no Motive but it self.

And since the undeserv'd Blessings of the Creation were abus'd, and yet God was pleas'd to vouchsafe yet greater Blessings to those ungratefull Wretches that abus'd them: since he has *Begotten us again* by Redeeming us, and we still *set at nought* our Redeemer; no *Word in our Tongue* can expresse our Vileness; nor can *the Tongues of Angels* sufficiently praise that Adorable Compassion which bears our Indignities, and labours to *overcome our Evil with Good*.

Lord what is Man, that thou boughtest him with thy precious Blood! what is that ungratefull Creature, which tramples under foot the Infinite price of his Ransom! *There is* Ps. 130. 4.
Mercy with thee: therefore shouldst thou be fear'd,
O

The Centurion's

O Blessed Jesus. And yet so regardless are the sons of Men, of thy transcendent Mercy, that too too many of them Revile, Blaspheme, Deny thee!

But I need not prove our Unworthiness, by these flagrant instances of Baseness. Alas! our common Life furnishes us with too many Proofs of it. I need not have recourse to our evil Actions: the very best of our Actions abundantly prove it.

How many Frailties and Infirmities mix themselves with our admir'd Virtues! *When the Sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord*, How often does Satan come amongst them! How much *Hay and Stubble* is blended with the Gold! How many *Tares* grow up with the *Wheat*!

Is there not Weariness and Distraction in our Devotions, Coldness and Indifference in our Zeal, Partiality in our Justice, Ostentation in our Charity? Is not all our *Holiness Rags and Corruption*?

The best of Men that receives any Mercy from God, may be represented by *Jehoiachin* King of *Judab*. He is like him taken Captive for the multitude of his Sins. But his offended God *lifts up his head, and brings him forth out of Prison, and speaks kindly to him*; and as the *King of Babylon set the Throne* of that unhappy Prince *above the Thrones of the Kings that were with him in Babylon*; so our gracious God raises repenting Man far above the Angels that fell. He *changes his Prison Garments, and*

permits

permits him to eat Bread before him continually all the days of his Life.

And he should with gratitude say, *All of my Father's House, were but dead Men before my Lord the King: and yet dost thou set thy Servant among them that do eat at thine own Table.* 2 Sam. 19. 28.

And whatsoever his Services are, he should reason, as Barzillai did with David, *Thy Servant will go a little way over Jordan with the King: and why should the King recompence it me with such a Reward.* v. 36.

The Mercies of God surpass our Expectation, no less that our Desert; and though our compassionate Father will accept us upon our Repentance, yet this should ever dwell upon our Thoughts, *I have sinn'd against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son: make me as one of thy hired Servants.* This humble disposition of Soul will incline him to bring forth the best Robe, and put it on us. Luk. 15. 22.

When we are bidden to the Wedding, if we go and sit down in the Lowest room, he that bade us, will come and say to each of us, Friend, go up higher; Then shall we have Glory in the presence of God.

Humility has a mighty force, it has power both with God and Men, and has always prevail'd.

When Abraham commun'd with God, and Intreated for an exceedingly sinfull People, he thus address'd himself to the Almighty, *Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but Dust and Ashes.* And the Lord vouch- Gen. 18. 27.

vouchsaf'd to hear his Intercessions, till there was no farther plea for Pardon, no more room for Mercy.

When *Jacob* committed himself to the Protection of God, at the approach of his angry Brother, he disclaim'd all pretensions to his Favour, and referr'd it entirely to his boundless Goodness. *I am not worthy of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou hast shew'd unto thy Servant; for with my Staff I pass'd over this Jordan, and now I am become two Bands.*

Gen. 32. 10.

1 Chron.
29. 11, 14,
15.

When *David* offer'd with a free Heart to the Temple of God, he bow'd himself down before him, with the words of Humility, saying, *Thine, O Lord, is the Greatness, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty. But who am I, and what is my People, that we should be able to offer so willingly? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are Strangers before thee, and Sojourners, as were all our Fathers: our Days on the Earth are as a Shadow, and there is none Abiding.*

Luke 1. 46,
47, 48, 49.

Behold the most amiable Pattern of Humility, the Blessed Virgin *Mary*! When *He whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, was pleas'd to come down, and dwell in the Temple of her Body, *her Soul did magnify the Lord, and her Spirit rejoic'd in God her Saviour. Because he had regarded the low estate of his Handmaiden: and he that was mighty had done to her great things.*

As

As this humble disposition inclines the Lord of Glory to shed his Favour upon us, so it prepares us to receive it with the utmost Thankfullness.

His Blessings, great in themselves, are rendered infinitely greater, by this consideration, that they are bestow'd upon undeserving Creatures. Every fresh instance of his Kindness, lays a new Debt upon us, and improves our sense of the Increasing Obligation. We are surpriz'd at it, as *the Holy Elizabeth* was, at the visit of the Blessed Virgin, when she thus express'd her wonder, *Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* Luke 1. 43.

Every Humble Spirit receives the Blessings of Heaven in like manner; and says within himself, *Whence is this to me?* and how could I deserve the Favour of God, that he should thus condescend to look upon me, to *renew his Compassions* to me *every Morning*, and multiply his Benefits every Moment?

Confidence and Presumption lessen our sense of these things, and ascribe so much to our Merit, that they forget the Goodness of God.

But Humility allows them their just weight, and does not pretend to lay any of our Services in the opposite Balance.

And it can never suffer us to stop in the course of our Duty, because it is fully perswaded, that the measure is still Imperfect, and our best Performances too short to equal our Obligations, too little to come in comparison with them.

It daily tells us how *much is forgiven us*, or rather it attempts to tell us; for indeed we can make no other estimate of our Sins, than this, *O how great is the sum of them!*

And it tells us *how much we ought to Love, because much is forgiven us.*

And instead of setting too high a value upon our Righteous Actions, it thinks them unworthy to be written in the Book of Remembrance; and did not Infinite Truth assure us, that they will be for ever Remembered, it would only Hope, that God would pass them by, amidst the number of our Offences.

And as it receives the Mercies of God, with a devout Astonishment in this World, it will be overcome with Joy and Wonder in the next, and teach us to say to that Faithfull God, *who will not forget our Work and Labour of Love; Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee Drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and cloth'd thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in Prison, and came unto thee?*

Mat. 25. 37,
38, 39.

Having Endeavour'd to possess you with an Humble sense of our Unworthiness, I shall Endeavour,

Secondly, To fill you with an awefull Reverence of the Divine Majesty. But we can approach but slowly to the consideration of it. For whensoever we think of it, it abashes and con-

conf
just
W
and
wort
twee
the
out
is bee
W
Pare
of t
the B
B
rupt
ness,
and
to th
in the
B
to b
and
woul
Falle
thof
And
span,
W
Israe
Hills
the
count
Four

confounds us; and much more when we have just consider'd our own Unworthiness.

We are unworthy even to think of God; and every Thought that we conceive is unworthy of him. And such is the distance between God and us, that we cannot pass from the one, to the other in our Reflections, without trembling at the sight of the wide Gulf that is between us.

What surprize must it be to our common Parent, to be taken out of the dark Womb of the Earth, and commanded to look up to the Beauty of Heaven, and the Glory of the Stars!

But how much greater must it be to corrupted Man, first to view his own Wretchedness, and the various circumstances of Guilt and Misery, and then to raise his Thoughts to the Glorious God of Heaven, *who dwelleth in the Light which no Man can approach unto!* 1 Tim. 6. 16.

But the Brightness of his Majesty needs not to be illustrated and set off by our Vileness and Unworthiness. His Distance from us would exceed our Conceptions, had we never Fallen, for he is Inconceivably greater than those Pure and Holy Spirits that never Fell. And we might as easily mete out Heaven with the span, as comprehend One of his Perfections.

When the Prophet Balaam saw the Tents of Israel from the Rocks, and beheld him from the Hills, he could not describe the vast extent of the People, but was forc'd to say, *Who can count the Dust of Jacob, and the Number of the Fourth part of Israel?* Numb. 23. 9. 10.

And were our Nature exalted to the highest pitch, and our Thoughts improv'd to the utmost measure of our Capacities, we could only then discover, that *with God is terrible Majesty* which we cannot comprehend, and *touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.*

Job 37. 22,
23.

The Stars that he has fix'd in the Firmament of the Heaven, seem to our naked Eye, to be no more than little Seeds or Dust of Light. And even in the most advantageous place for view, with all the Assistance that the Eye can receive, so distant are they from us, that we can only conjecture what Glorious Bodies they are, and can guess but imperfectly at the Largeness of their measure: and yet these are not the Thousandth part of the Works of God; and, high as they are, he is infinitely *higher than they.*

Were there nothing else to convince us of our Unworthiness, yet the Divine Majesty is enough to strike us down to the Earth with a sense of it.

When *Simon Peter saw* the Miraculous draught of Fishes, *he fell down at Jesus Knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinfull Man, O Lord.*

Luke 5. 8.

So naturally did this sudden effect of the Power of God bring him to an Humble sense of the Unworthiness of Man.

Mat. 3. 15,
14.

When *Jesus came to be Baptiz'd of John, he forbade him, saying, I have need to be Baptiz'd of thee, and comest thou to me?*

Mat.

He

He could hardly bear this extraordinary Condescension, that so Divine a Person should permit a sinfull Man, to perform so Sacred an Office upon him.

And when our Saviour *began to wash his Disciples Feet*, Peter said unto him, *Lord, thou shalt never wash my Feet*: not knowing the benefit intended by it, he was ashamed to suffer his Lord to Minister to him: and though he was mistaken, yet we may learn from his Example, to think our selves Unworthy of the Mercies of Jesus, *who is over all, God Blessed for ever!* John 13. 5. 8. Rom. 9. 5.

He daily Ministers to us, in the like Compassionate Offices, and washes and cleanses us, that we may *have a part in him*. And therefore since it is his gracious Will, we should thankfully receive those Mercies of which we are Unworthy, and say with St Peter, *Lord, wash not my Feet only, but also my Hands and my Head.* John 13. 9.

Whensoever we receive (and we every moment receive) the Gifts of his Bounty, we should consider their own Intrinsick value, the Unworthiness of the Receivers, and the Majesty of the Giver. And each of these Considerations will constrain us to think and speak of him with an awefull Regard.

But do we suffer them to dwell upon our Thoughts? Do we order our Words aright, when we express our Conceptions of God! This alas! is above our Power. But I fear we are far from Performing, even that little

that is in our Power. *What meaneth* else the insolent Blaphemy that is heard in our Streets? the Loud defiance of the Almighty that daily *reacheth up to Heaven*? Is this consistent with an Humble sense of our Wretchedness? Is this the deference that is due to the God of all Perfection?

Even the Being of Him that brought us into Life, is denied; and All his Sacred Attributes are turn'd to Ridicule. ✕

The Father of an Infinite Majesty, was pleas'd to send down *the Express Image of his Person*; and though Ungratefull Men despis'd his Prophets, yet he concluded with himself, Surely *they will Reverence my Son.*

Mat. 21. 37.

But they glory in doing despite to him, and *set him at nought like Herod and his Men of War.*

Luk. 23. 11.

We may perhaps imagin that *these Enemies of God are Poor, they are Foolish: that they know not the way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God.*

Jer. 5. 4.

But if we go to *the Great Men*, to the zealous Advocates for Reason, the Masters in Learning, and even to the Pastors of the Church, we shall find Apostates amongst them, that *deny the Divinity of the Lord that bought them.*

But let us learn of the Centurion to *walk Humbly with our God*; or if the Example of a *Man like our selves* will not move us, let us imitate the glorious Company of Hea-

Rev. 4. 10.

ven, who *cast their Crowns before the Throne,*
say-

saying
Power
and

E
Prop
am
midst
can

B
Lost
is H
does
Hun
ble,
And
thin
we

T
Go
tion
is p
not
his
fire

C
wh
and
nal
tha
and
tho

saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Rev. 5. 13.

Each of us indeed may complain with the Prophet, *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a Man of unclean Lips, and I dwell in the midst of a People of unclean Lips!* How then can I appear before the Lord of Hosts? Isai. 6. 5.

But we should remember that the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy, who dwells in the High and Holy Place, does also dwell with him that is of a Contrite and Humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite Ones. And therefore notwithstanding our Unworthiness; notwithstanding the Majesty of God; we should,

Thirdly, Put an entire Confidence in his Goodness and Power. Though our Restoration from Sin may seem impossible to us, yet it is possible with God. And though we deserve not the least of his Mercies, he will yet open his Eye of Mercy upon us, if we sincerely desire Pardon and Forgiveness.

Our loving Father can yet renew in us, whatsoever hath been decayed by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by our own Carnal Will and Frailness: we know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with thee; and though we are Dead in Trespasses and Sins, thou canst even yet Raise us up.

The

1 Kings 13.
4, 6.

The same Power which *dried up the Hand of Jeroboam*, that was put forth against the Prophet, could immediately restore it again, that it became as it was before.

Isai. 1. 5, 6.

Our whole Head is sick, and our whole Heart faint. From the sole of the Foot, even to the Head, there is no Soundness in us; but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.

But if our Gracious God be pleas'd to speak the words of Power and Goodness, *I will, be you clean; the Leprosie of Sin will depart from us, and our Flesh will come again, like unto the Flesh of a little Child, and we shall be clean.*

The Temple of our Body is defil'd, and made as an heap of Stones; but he can build it up again, and adorn it with the Beauty of Holiness; and the Glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former.

2 Chron. 6.
18.

But will God in very deed dwell with Men on the Earth?

Yes, the Holy Spirit of God will come down and abide with us; and if we disdain not to receive the Heavenly Guest, he will not disdain to continue under the covering of that Roof, which is now the dwelling-place of our Vices.

Mic. 7. 19.

He will subdue our Iniquities, and cast all our Sins into the depths of the Sea; and give us that Righteousness which he will afterwards accept.

He will take away the blindness of our Reason, the perverseness of our Will, and the violence of our Passions; and having wrought the

the m
with
vouc
M
descen
full,
than
open,
Pres
T
Pow
our
henf
A
ter,
dare
there
Brea
Goo
the
O M
thee,
in C
to fl
and
shou
brui
Goo
enli
your
I
emb

the mighty change, he will behold his Works with pleasure, after this Second creation, and vouchsafe to say again that *They are very Good.*

Marvell not at these things, that God should descend from Heaven, and be present with sinfull, corrupted Men: *you shall see greater things than these; Hereafter you shall see the Heavens open,* and the Sons of Men *Ascending* to the Presence of God.

Thus if we consider his Goodness and Power, they will support us under the sense of our Unworthiness, and the Awefull Apprehensions of the Divine Majesty.

And indeed when the thoughts of the Latter, have struck us with confusion, and we dare not lift up our Eyes to Heaven; when *there remains no Strength in us, neither is there* Dan. 10 17,
18, 19. *Breath left in us;* then the remembrance of his Goodness comes seasonably to our relief, like the Angel that touch'd the Prophet Daniel, and said, *O Man, greatly belov'd, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.* And if we Trust in God, we shall be *strengthened*, and enabled to stand before his Face.

Our Unworthiness and his Majesty check and restrain our Confidence; but lest they should cast us down too much, and *break the bruised Reed, and quench the smoking Flax;* his Goodness lifts us up again, and gives us this enlivening encouragement, *Be of good cheer, your Sins are forgiven you.*

Let us therefore learn the Humility, and embrace the Hope of the Centurion; and

main-

maintain our Faith through all the changes of the World, equally avoiding the dangerous extremes of Presumption and Despair.

Let us never flatter our selves into an opinion, that we are strictly worthy of God's Favour; neither let us cast away our Hope, though we are in our selves unworthy of it.

When we approach to *the Throne of Grace*, or to the Table of the Lord, we must not presume to go, trusting in our own Righteousness, but in his manifold and great Mercies.

We must remember that he is Almighty, that we may not receive his Blessings unworthily. But we must also remember, that He declares his Almighty Power most chiefly in shewing Mercy and Pity. And though He is the Maker of All Things, and the Judge of All Men, who offers us his Body and Blood, Let us not be afraid to draw near to his Table, whensoever he invites us; for He is also our compassionate Saviour, our Brother, and our Friend.

And if we frequent his Presence with hearty Repentance and true Faith, He will Pardon and Deliver us from all our Sins, Confirm and Strengthen us in all Goodness, and Bring us to everlasting Life.

And though the Objects of our Faith are great beyond Expression, and beyond our Desert, yet *as we have Believ'd, so shall it be done unto us.*

The

The Government of the Thoughts.

A
SERMON

PREACH'D at

BRIGHTWELL

IN

Oxford-shire.

Prov. IV. 23.

*Keep thy Heart with all Diligence:
for out of it are the Issues of Life.*

THE Heart of Man is so large and extensive, that it is almost as hard to know the compass of it, as to *mete out the Heavens with a span.* It is deep as the Grave, and secret as the *Land of Destruction.* And the Thoughts that rise within it, are swift in their motion, and infinitely various in their kinds. They pass from one end of the Earth to the other, with the force and quickness of *Lightning, that cometh*

Serm. XVII.

out

out of the East, and shineth in an instant, even unto the West. And when we endeavour to take a view of them, they appear like the numberless Armies of Creatures, which were brought by God, to our First Parent, to receive their different Names.

The Government of our Thoughts is so difficult a Work, that we cannot but say, *Who is sufficient for it?* and yet it is so important and necessary, that we are oblig'd to undertake it.

And the Wisest of Men has therefore charg'd his Son, to *keep his Heart with all Diligence*: and enforc'd his Charge with the strongest Reason: *for out of it are the Issues of Life.*

The nature of our Actions depends upon our Thoughts: and the course of our Life is either pure from Evil, or polluted with it, as our Heart, the Fountain from whence it flows, is clean, or unclean.

So Imperfect indeed are the Laws of Men, that they cannot reach to the first Principles of Sin, or stifle it while it *is yet growing in the Womb.* But so Perfect are the Laws of God, that they enter into *the Deep* of the Heart, and extend even to those hidden Iniquities, which none but an All-seeing Eye can discern.

And though our Evil Thoughts and Imaginations are not liable to be tried by any Earthly Power, or to appear at the Tribunal of Human Justice; yet we should not flatter our selves with the hopes of their Impunity, or let them pass without controul: For our

Rea-

Real
gove
verei
along
appo
and
fice;
Terror
them
The
first
cond
fore
But
Wise
tions
Wick
were
no m
arism
A
in us
they
Men
Hea
and
sure
haste
O
enab
And
evil
whe
sitt

Reason is therefore more strongly oblig'd to govern them aright, because, like other Sovereign Princes, it is accountable to God alone. This is that great Work which He has appointed this His Vice-gerent to discharge; and it is in vain entrusted with so high an Office; *it bears the Sword in vain*, if it is not a *Terror to Evil Thoughts*, and does not restrain them from *bringing forth Sin*.

The Heathen perhaps might wonder at the first mention of those Righteous Laws that condemn the Wickedness of the Mind, before it manifests it self in outward Actions. But these Laws were the Dictates of Infinite Wisdom, and are rais'd upon the Foundations of undeniable Reason. For *the Deluge of Wickedness would not over-spread the Earth*, were it check'd in the Heart, when it is yet no more than *a little Cloud, like a Man's hand, arising out of the Sea*.

And moreover those Sins which lurk within us, are not small in themselves, though they seem to be as nothing in the sight of Men. For Wickedness is fashion'd in the Heart, and nourish'd and strengthen'd there; and though it does not come to the *full measure of its Stature*, yet it grows apace, and hastens toward Maturity.

Our Breast warms the Viper into Life, and enables it to wound us with the *Sting of Death*. And if we consider the fatal Influence of our evil Thoughts, and the poysonous Infection wherewith they taint our Words and Actions;

we shall find it necessary to keep our Heart with all Diligence, and place a constant guard over it, that the Enemy may not sow his Tares in that fruitfull Field, and the Seeds of Wickedness may not take Root therein.

That I may awaken you into this watchfull Care, I shall (though unequal to so large a Work) endeavour,

First, To shew what Thoughts are properly Sinfull, and what Danger arises from them. And

Secondly, To give such Directions as may through God's Assistance, enable you to avoid and prevent these sinfull Thoughts.

And,

First, I am to shew what Thoughts are properly sinfull, and what Danger arises from them. And here it is not unnecessary to premise, that we are not guilty of Sin, in those sudden Thoughts that start up in the Mind, before we are aware of them, and as suddenly disappear.

We contract no Pollution from them, unless we suffer them to make their Abode in us, and cherish and entertain them. For as we derive no Virtue from those fleeting Thoughts of Goodness that enter into us insensibly, and pass away like the Early dew: so neither do we incur any Guilt, by those impious Thoughts, that steal upon us like a Thief in the Night, and are rejected as soon as they are perceiv'd.

The

The Former are only Invitations to our Duty, which avail nothing unless they are accepted. And the Latter are only Temptations to Sin, and do not render us Sinfull, unless we comply with and indulge them.

The fiery Darts of the Wicked one are perpetually flying abroad: and the subtle Enemy makes a trial of us, by casting them into our Minds. But if they do *not continue in one stay: and the trace of them cannot be found, any more than the path of an Arrow in the Air, which immediately cometh together again, so that a Man cannot know where it went through;* we need not condemn our selves for these transient Thoughts, but should rather rejoyce that we have rejected the Temptations that were presented to us.

The Accursed Spirit sends these evil Thoughts, as Spies, to gain Intelligence of the state of our Souls, and forms his conjectures concerning our Strength or Weakness, by our acceptance, or refusal of them. If they continue with us, he imagins that we are inclin'd to receive him; but if they *return empty*, he concludes that he *has no part, nor lot in us.*

We may illustrate his Disappointment, by the instance of *the Dove* that was sent forth Gen. 8. from the Ark by Noah, to see if the Waters were abated from off the face of the Ground: *she found no rest for the sole of her Foot, and return'd unto him into the Ark, and he took her and pull'd her in.*

And we may also illustrate the First-fruits of our Adversaries Success, by *the Olive-leaf* that

The Government

that was brought by the Dove when she was again sent forth, by which Noah knew that the Waters were abated from off the Earth.

And I wish that I could not yet farther illustrate his Success, by the Dove that was sent forth a third time, and return'd not again unto him any more.

But till these Wicked Thoughts are thus effectually receiv'd, we need not disquiet our selves at their vain and fruitless Attempts upon us. Even the best of Men are liable to them: and even in the most Sacred Offices of Religion.

While the Angels of Light are watching over and observing our Deportment; the Prince of Darkness also stands at our right hand, endeavouring either to corrupt our Devotions with impious Thoughts, or to withdraw our Minds from their Eternal interest, to the Trifling affairs of this World, and turn the house of God, into a house of Merchandise.

But if we abhor his vile Insinuations; tho' they tend to Presumption, or Despair, or even Blasphemy it self; yet we are free from the Imputation of Guilt, and our Abhorrence is a Token of our Innocence.

And therefore those unhappy Good Men are justly to be pitied, who disturb themselves with dreadful Apprehensions, because they have been sometimes tempted by wicked Thoughts, though they never suffer'd them to dwell in their Breasts.

The

The first Motions of Anger are likewise to be excus'd; for the Passions that are planted in us, are apt to be kindled when they are touch'd by a surprizing Provocation. But if our Reason interposes with its mild Persuasions, and does not permit the Spark to be blown up into a Flame; it is rather to be commended for putting a stop to Mischief, than blam'd for not preventing the unexpected Occasion of it. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark every sudden disorder of the Mind, O Lord, who could stand?*

When *Saul's* injurious Behaviour had provok'd *David* to cut off the skirt of the King's Robe, how soon did his Reason subdue his Passion, with that forcible Argument; *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my Master the Lord's Anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Anointed of the Lord!*

When the Injustice of *Ananias* drew too free a rebuke from *St Paul*; and he was charg'd with reviling God's High Priest. How readily did the Apostle recall the rebuke, by saying, *I wist not Brethren, that he was the High Priest!*

And if both these Instances were fairly excusable (as certainly they were) though they proceeded farther than the Thoughts, and broke forth into Words and Actions: much more are the earliest motions of the Thoughts, which are still'd and appeas'd, before they rise into a Tumult.

Even our Saviour himself was Tempted by the Devil, to stoop to the basest Idolatry: But he cast off the ensnaring overtures, with
 Luke 4. 8. a great and God-like Disdain, saying, *Get thee behind me Satan.*

And if we learn after his Example, to resist the Tempter, when he endeavours to *pos-*
 Mat. 4. 11. *sess us* with evil Thoughts; *the Devil will leave us*, as he left our Lord and Master; and *the Angels that came and ministered to him*, will also come and *minister to our Salvation.*

Heb. 4. 15. *The Holy Jesus was Tempted like as we are, yet without Sin:* and if we are only Tempted as he was, we shall be without Sin.

It is indeed our Infirmary that evil Thoughts can enter into our Hearts: But we shall not be charg'd with their Guilt, if they are immediately thrown out with a just Abhorrence and Indignation.

This being premis'd, I may the more easily proceed to shew what Thoughts are properly sinfull in us, and will endanger our Eternal State.

And such in general are all those Thoughts that are wicked in themselves, and are entertain'd with a Wicked Complacency by us; that are invited to come in, and encourag'd to stay, till they have polluted the Affections, perverted the Will, and gradually prepar'd us to commit deliberate Sins.

And though we should not obtain an Opportunity of committing them, or should be afraid to give them Birth, and proceed to

Action,

Action, yet we are justly blameable in the Eye of God, for harbouring his Enemies, and being partakers of their Counsels against him.

O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret; unto their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united. Gen. 49. 6.

Let not any one flatter himself, that he shall not be Condemn'd for evil Thoughts, if they rest in the Heart, without breaking forth into Life. The just proceedings of Earthly Governours furnish us with a proper illustration of this Case. For to Conceal and Protect, Abet and Comfort a Traitor, involves us in the Guilt, and exposes us to the Punishment of Treason, though we do not go so far with him, as to joyn in the open Acts of Rebellion.

Our sinfull Thoughts may be first consider'd as leading to Sin, and disposing us to commit it. And we are then absolutely guilty of it, when we raise in our Minds an extravagant expectation of its Pleasures, and go out to meet the Temptation, with a false Apprehension of the height of its Enjoyment. This debauches the Passions and Affections, gives an unnatural eagerness to our Desires, and makes us lie in wait for an Opportunity of gratifying our Lusts.

There is then a Party form'd within us, treacherous to our Souls, and devoted to the common Enemy: and as soon as he comes before us, and says, *Who is on my side? who? they throw us down, as the Eunuchs threw down Jerebel, to be trodden under foot* by our Vices. 2 Kings 9. 32, 33.

While the imaginary Pleasure is wrapt up in our Hearts, and fed and nourish'd by our vain Imaginations, there is a train prepar'd against us: and the intended Mischief is as swift in its progress, *as the Fire that devoureth the Stubble, and the Flame that consumeth the Chaff.* And the imperfect Virtues that began to take root in us, are then no more than *Rottenness, and their Blossom goes up as Dust.*

Isai. 5. 24.

As soon as our vicious Affections give the Tokens to our Adversaries, by which we are Betray'd: *Behold they come with speed swiftly: their Arrows are sharp, and all their Bowes bent:* and we need not quicken them by our wicked Thoughts and Expectations; for they hasten towards us, with the utmost force and activity: *none are weary, nor stumble amongst them: none slumber nor sleep: their Horses hoofs are like Flint, and their Wheels like a Whirlwind.*

v. 26, 27,
28.

Sin is so contrary to our Nature, so offensive to our Reason, that we are shock'd at its first approach, and are hardly brought to enter into its Embraces. It is therefore the daily endeavour of the subtle Tempter, to wear away our just Prejudice against it, and lead us into a Familiarity with it. And if we are perswaded first to think of it without dislike, and then to receive the Thoughts of it with Approbation; he is encourag'd to present it to us, and easily gains access, being introduc'd by our favourable Opinion.

The Prevalence of Sin is owing to a False representation of Things: and if our own

Heart

Heart concurs in deceiving us, and indulges it self in admiring the Delusion: we are certainly caught in the snare that is spread for us, and are made the willing Instruments of our chosen Destruction.

And there is no less danger in recollecting the pleasure of our past Sins, than in the fond expectation of those that are to come.

There are almost as many Wickednesses acted upon the secret Stage of the Imagination, as on the open Theatre of the World. And there is frequently greater Guilt in the fancied Repetition of Evil, than in the first Performance of it. For unless we are given up to a *Reprobate sense*, we go unwillingly to the commission of Sin, and yield but an imperfect consent to it. And after we have done it, we remember it with regret, and wish we could entirely lose it in forgetfulness.

But to recall the Enjoyment of it, and study to Perpetuate it in our Minds: to fix our Thoughts upon it, and clothe it with a pleasing Appearance, when it arises before us: this certainly argues the vilest Degeneracy of Nature, and shews that we entirely delight in Wickedness.

When our Consciences are yet tender, we avoid the sight of our Guilt, which haunts and troubles us: but if we act it over again in our Minds, we seem to have conquer'd our Fears, and even to entertain our selves by bringing up the Ghosts of our departed Sins.

The Pleasures of Vice are but as a shadow: and our unhappy acquaintance with them, must certainly convince us of their Vanity and Deceitfullness. And we are therefore guilty of the most obstinate Folly, if we pursue after them, when they are past away, and desire *the shadow to return, when it is gone down.*

The sinfullness of the Mind, in meditating with delight upon former Evils, is properly Spiritual Wickedness, and of the highest Degree. For when the Body is unable to bear the slavery of Sin: and through the weariness of the Flesh, we cannot keep pace with our corrupt Inclinations: this draws off the very Spirit of Vice from the Dregs of Matter, raises it into a more sprightly and active Substance, and gives it new Life and Vigour.

By this means our languishing Lusts are kindled afresh; and even our unwilling Body is born away by the rapid Flame, and hurried into the repetition of Evil.

Such Thoughts in general as these are properly sinfull: but I will give some particular Instances, that do especially deserve that Infamous Character.

The first that I shall mention, are those Profane and Impious Thoughts, that are encourag'd in the Mind, till at length it *shoots forth its poysonous Arrows against the Almighty. Our God is a consuming Fire:* and we should never think of his Dreadfull Majesty, but *with Fear and Trembling.*

But

But yet how many are there that are glad to conceive, and fond of entertaining a scornfull contempt of him! they search and even ransack the store of their Imagination, that they may find out something that will pass for Wit, and render him Ridiculous in their vain Opinion.

And when they have dipp'd their Arrows in Gall, and cloth'd their Thoughts with the sharpest Invective that they can possibly frame; then they bring it forth with the vilest Mockery and Derision of God; and endeavour to provoke his Faithfull Servants, by saying, *Behold your King.*

The Thoughts of Revenge and Malice are also most especially Sinfull.

The Effects of sudden Passion are indeed frequently Fatal; but the Good-natur'd concern that often immediately follows them, bespeaks our Pity, and seems to alleviate the Guilt of those involuntary Evils. And though Reason is justly blameable for giving a loose to Passion: yet it is justly to be commended, for gathering up the Reins into its Hand, and hastning to restore the troubled Mind to a peaceable State.

But this is not the case of those that preserve and nourish Revengefull Thoughts.

To consider and dwell upon an Injury; survey every Circumstance of it, and lade it with many Aggravations, and perhaps more than ever were intended: to apply Fewell to our Passion, and cast Oyl into the Flame: to contrive

trive the severest Revenge, and seek for an opportunity of executing it: and in the mean time, to feed upon the Mischief that we set before us, and glut our selves with the barbarous Pleasure: surely, if any Thoughts are chargeable with Sin; these are most exceedingly Sinfull.

And Malicious Thoughts are *like unto them*. To lay up an inveterate Enmity in the Heart, and taint it with a settled Rancour: to skin over the Wound while it Festers within; and even to admire the Ulcer while it gathers Corruption: to form the worst Designs, under a smiling Countenance, and a pretended calmness of Mind: to *make ready for Battle* while the Enemy is lull'd into Peace: and to think of the surest way of striking, while we delay to strike: to examin and review the intended Evil; and after full deliberation, to conclude that it is very good: such Malicious Thoughts as these, are utterly contrary to Humanity, and bear the nearest Resemblance to their accursed Authour.

And I may also mention Covetous and Ambitious Thoughts, and not improperly joyn them together, because the one over-rates the Riches; the other, the Honours of this World; and both, in proportion to their unreasonable Estimate, prompt us to crave their different Objects, with an extravagant eagerness of desire.

Great is the Guilt and Danger of indulging these evil Thoughts: for they get the mastery

over

over us, and lay waſt our Conſcience, and command us to *Fall down and worſhip the Idols which they have ſet up.*

And they that think too highly of Worldly Riches or Honours, can neither preſerve their Innocence, nor ſet bounds to their Wickedneſs: but are compell'd to go into all the meaſures of Iniquity, and betray their Church and Country, even at the Altar of God, to obtain the ends of Avarice and Ambition.

Having ſhewn you what Thoughts are Sinfull and Dangerous; I ſhall

Secondly, Give ſuch Directions, as may enable you to prevent and avoid them. And

1ſt, You ſhould conſider that God is always Preſent to obſerve the motions of the Heart. Sin is unable to bear a Witneſs, and ſtudies to eſcape the Eye of the World, and guards it ſelf againſt our Reflections. But though it may lie hid from the ſearch of Men, and may bribe our Reaſon to wink at it; yet it cannot thus deceive an All-ſeeing God.

The Darkneſs of our Heart, is no Darkneſs to him: its inward Foldings are as open in his Sight, as the plaineſt Simplicity: and he diſcerns the Seeds of Sin, when they are quicken'd into an imperfect Diſpoſition: when they grow into a ſtronger Inclination: and when they are ripen'd into a prevailing Reſolution, to do Evil. He ſees our Reluctance chang'd at firſt into a doubtfull Willingneſs, and at length, into a poſitive Deſire.

You

You should consider that the Heart is the Temple of God, and the Place of his Presence. For though he does not rest upon it, with a visible Glory, yet he has vouchsaf'd us some Tokens of Himself, and drawn a faint Resemblance of *the Holy of Holies*. For our Reason is the Image of Him, and derives its Power immediately from above. And the Will and Affections are as *Ministring Spirits*, that are appointed to do it Service, and Bow down before *its Throne*.

The Heart being so Sacred a Place, it is Sacrilege to alienate it from God, and Impious to permit his Enemies to enter into it.

1 Cor. 3. 16. *If any Man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy: For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are. For the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.*

This consideration should effectually oblige you to reject every evil Thought, that endeavours to insinuate it self into your Breasts; and you should be always ready to remove it from you, with this brave Declaration: *This is none other than the House of God: and shall be kept as Sacred as the Gate of Heaven.*

2dly, You should avoid the occasions of Sin, and beware of conversing with its Treacherous Objects. For the purest Innocence cannot safely dwell in a vicious Air: nor can the most stedfast Virtue depend upon it self, when it ventures forth into Danger, where *a Thousand fall beside it, and Ten thousand at its Right Hand.*

While

While we are cloth'd with these Bodies that are weakned by our First Parents Transgression we cannot approach to the Borders of Sin, without being Tempted to commit it. And there are but few, that can baffle its Subtlety, or withstand its Assaults.

Evil Thoughts will rise in the Mind from the frequent appearance of the Temptation, and gradually perswade us to give it a favourable Reception. Our firmest Resolutions will be melted down, and the Will bent and inclin'd to embrace the Evil, that is grown familiar with it.

As therefore you would escape the Danger, it highly concerns you to stand at the remotest distance from it. For the Thoughts are prone to wander abroad, and will too soon be infected with the Corruption that is round about them.

3dly, You should constantly employ your Thoughts. This indeed is your Duty, in regard to that glorious Faculty, your Reason. For it was not given you by God, for no end or purpose; but for his Honour and Service. And you greatly abuse it, if you suffer it to lie idle, and useless, and wast *the Oyl* that is put into *your Lamps*. And though you do not think of Evil, it will yet be an unpardonable Sin, if you do not think at all.

But this is only a suppos'd Case: for the Mind is of so Active and Restless a Nature, that it cannot refrain from thinking. And if it does not think of Good, it will necessarily think

think of Evil. And if the Enemy finds room in our Hearts, he will come and take Possession. The first sinfull Thought that moves within us, is sent as an Harbinger to prepare Lodgings for more: and if it perceives that our Heart is empty, *it goeth and taketh many other Spirits more wicked than it self: and they enter in and dwell there.*

That you may not receive such treacherous Guests, you should,

4thly, Possess your self with a just Hatred and Abhorrence of Sin. Consider the Enmity that it bears to God, and the Injury it does to your Immortal Souls. Let this consideration be ever fix'd in your Minds, and provoke you to cast it off with disdain. And whensoever you are invited to embrace any evil Thoughts, return this positive Answer to the ensnaring Invitation, *Away from me, ye Wicked; I will keep the Commandments of my God.*

When you are ready to flatter your selves, with the expectation of sinfull Pleasure: Look forward to that dreadfull Day, when you will be incapable of Tasting the pleasures of Sin; and all your Hopes and Desires will be turn'd into a fearfull Apprehension of immediate Judgment.

When you are Tempted to remember the past Enjoyment (if it may be call'd Enjoyment) of Evil, assure your selves that the Time will come, when you will wish, but in vain, that you could for ever forget it: and the remembrance of it will be grievous to you.

If

If y
Impic
to co
certai
flectio
prete
ing to
which
stick f
while
again
of De
W
boyl
to pr
tent,
think
cute
whon
is but
away
after
ment
than
than
make
of th
reach
Souls
the T
W
estab
is lik

If you are inclin'd to conceive Profane and Impious Thoughts of God; make no delay to consider the fatal Consequences that will certainly flow from them. Turn your Reflections upon your selves, and take off the pretended sharpness of your Wit, by attending to this important Truth, that *the Arrows* which you prepare against the Almighty, *will stick fast in you, and drink up your Spirits.* And while you *whet your Sword and bend your Bow* against God, you are *ordaining the Instruments of Death* for your miserable Souls.

When the Thoughts of Revenge begin to boyl in your Breast; and your Passion delights to provoke it self: think of the narrow extent, and short duration of your Power: and think withall that you have no right to execute Vengeance. Consider the Person upon whom you are mov'd to wreck your Fury: he is but a poor, helpless Man, whose Life passes away like *the Shadow that departeth.* And after Death, if he goes into the Place of Torment, he will be infinitely more miserable, than your Revenge can make him, or even than the most inveterate Enemy can desire to make him. But if he goes into the Mansions of the Blessed; he will there be far above the reach of your impotent Vengeance: for *the Souls of the Just are in the Hand of the Lord, and the Torments of Malice shall not touch them.*

When your Hatred of any one, begins to establish it self; and *the ground of your Heart* is likely to become the seat of Malice: remember

member that every malicious Thought conspires against your eternal Interest; and after it has contriv'd to do a temporary Mischief to your Enemy, will for ever prey upon you, with a *Worm that shall never die, and a Fire that never shall be quench'd.*

When Ambition and Covetousness, display the Riches and Honours which they passionately admire: Turn away your Eyes from beholding the beautifull Delusion: and judge not according to the Value which is now set upon the things of this World, but according to that juster Estimate which you will one Day make, when this transitory Scene will be remov'd, and you will be fully convinc'd, that all the Kingdoms of the Earth bear no proportion to *the price of your Ransom.*

sthly, That no evil Thoughts may gain admission into your Breasts, let them be constantly engag'd in meditating upon the Excellence of Virtue, and the Rewards of Eternity.

The more you consider your Duty, so much the more it will recommend it to your Esteem. As your Acquaintance with it is improv'd, your Pleasure will increase: it will daily enlarge your Capacities, and daily fill them. And the Hopes of Heaven are so delightfull a Prospect, that if you are advanc'd to it, you will never bear to be withdrawn from it. Every vain Thought that endeavours to force it self upon you, will be thrust away with an Holy Violence: and you will be unwilling to

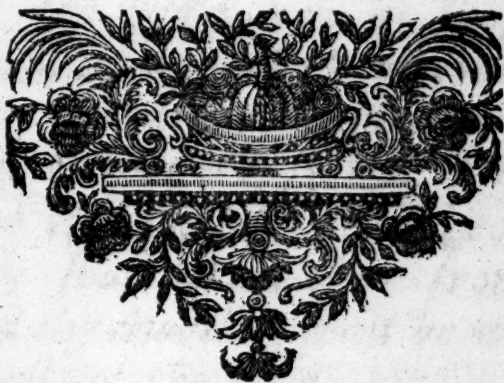
be

be with-held a moment, from the engaging Prospect of the Happiness of Heaven.

Lastly, Since you are unable of your selves to help your selves; offer up your Petitions at the Throne of Grace, that Almighty God may defend you from all evil Thoughts that assault and hurt the Soul.

Beseech him to guard you, as with *Cherubims and a flaming Sword*, turning every way, to keep the way to your Hearts.

And let it be your unwearied Endeavour, to invite the Holy Spirit, to *come down and visit his Temple*, and dwell continually there, till you ascend with him into *the Habitation of his Glory*.



be with-held a moment from the engaging
 prospect of the happiness of Heaven.
 Since you are unable of your selves
 to help yourselves, offer up your Petitions at
 the Throne of Grace, that Almighty God
 may deliver you from all evil Thoughts that
 assault and hurt the Soul.
 Behold him to guard you, as with a Chain
 him and a flaming sword, turning every way to
 keep the way to your Heart.
 And let it be your unwearied Endeavour
 to invite the Holy Spirit to come down and
 dwell in your Temple, and dwell continually there,
 till you are all with him into the Habitation
 of the Glory.



5 JY61

The

S

Wh

m

v

z

d

th

a

B

I

Se

*The Weakness and Uncertainty of
Human Reason.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
UNIVERSITY
OF

O X F O R D,

At St. MARY'S.

Dan. IV. 31, 32.

While the word was in the King's mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The Kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from Men, and thy dwelling shall be with the Beasts of the field.—

LORD what is Man! How Great and
Glorious in his first Estate! How
Shamefull and Miserable, after his
Fall! Thou, O Lord, madest him but a

Serm. XVIII.

Y

little

338 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

little lower than the Angels, and wert pleas'd to stamp the Divine Image upon him. Thou gavest him Dominion over the Works of thy Hands, and didst put all things in Subjection under his Feet.

Yet this Lord of the Creation is forgetfull of his Natural Perfection, and degrades himself from the high Estate in which thou wert pleas'd to place him. He fulhes the brightness of his Reason, quenches that Heavenly Flame, and brings himself down to a levell with *the Beasts that perish*. And there is not a more remarkable Instance of this fatal change, than that which the Text has set before us.

Dan. 2. 37.

Nebuchadnezzar was a King of Kings; and the God of Heaven had given him a Kingdom, Power, and Strength, and Glory. Many Nations were directed by his Wisdom, and the People of distant Countries waited with Trembling for the Laws that came from his Mouth. His Empire was of the widest Extent, and it was difficult even to number the Provinces that were subject to him. His Will was an effectual Law; and as soon as the Herald cried out, To you it is commanded, O People, Nations, and Languages; all the People, Nations, and Languages fell down before the King.

But though he was endued with Reason, to manage this weight of Power, and *to go in and out before this great People*, yet he forgot the Authour and Giver of his Reason and Power, and made himself the Center and Foundation of all his Confidence.

But

But how vain was his Confidence! How weak the Foundation of it! *Verily every Man living, at his best Estate, is altogether Vanity!*

While Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his House, Dan. 4. 4. and flourishing in his Palace, he saw a Dream 5, 12, 21. which made him afraid, and the Thoughts upon his Bed troubled him. He beheld the resemblance of himself in a Tree which grew and was strong, whose Leaves were fair, and the Fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the Beasts of the Field dwelt, and upon whose Branches the Fowls of the Heaven had their habitation.

And it was a just Resemblance of him; for his Greatness was grown and reach'd to Heaven, v. 22. and his Dominion to the end of the Earth.

But he also saw an Holy One coming down from Heaven, and saying, *Hew the Tree down, and destroy it.* v. 23.

This dreadful Vision, and the Interpretation of it, by the Prophet Daniel, admonish'd him of his Danger. But the Admonition was given in vain. For at the end of Twelve months, v. 29, 30. as he walk'd in the Palace of the Kingdom of Babylon, he was swoln with Pride, and wrapt up in Admiration of the House of his Kingdom, the Might of his Power, and the Honour of his Majesty.

But in the midst of his Boasting, v. 31. There fell a Voice from Heaven that told him, the Kingdom and his Reason was departed from him.

Had he only lost his Kingdom, though that in the account of mistaken Men, had been a

340 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

Loss greatly to be lamented; yet his Reason might have supplied the want of it, and taught him to judge according to God's Judgment, *who accounteth all the Kingdoms of the World as a very little Thing, and as the small Dust of the Balance.*

But not only to lose the Character of a King, but also the distinguishing Character of a Man; *To be driven from Men, and to have his dwelling with the Beasts of the Field, and be as void of Understanding as they: surely this was the consummation of Misery.*

Dan. 4. 32.

And if we rightly consider this wretched Instance of Human Weakness, neither the splendor of any Thing that is great, nor the conceit of any Thing that is good in us, will any way withdraw our Eyes, from looking upon our selves, as sinfull Dust and Ashes.

Our Reason is a Crown of Glory, if we use it to the Honour of God; but if we abuse this precious Talent to his Dishonour, it will only aggravate our Misery and Shame.

If it were lawfull to be Proud in any Case, This distinguishing Faculty of Man, might seem to justify it. But even This is insufficient; and though it shine forth with the most lively, piercing Rays, though it make us like to the Angels, though it be the Image of God himself; yet we ought not to grow Presumptuous upon it, *for Pride was not made for Men.*

I shall therefore take occasion from Nebuchadnezzar's Fall, to shew the Weakness and

Un-

Uncertainty of our Reason, and possess you with an Humble sense of it,

First, Because it is subject to Natural Decay;

Secondly, It is liable to be extinguish'd by sudden Violence; And,

Thirdly, It is frequently impair'd and lost by Moral Corruption. And

First, Our Reason is subject to Natural Decay. But before we consider it in its Declining state, we may humble our selves by looking back to its Weakness and Imperfection in our Infancy, and observe the slowness of its growth, and the several degrees by which it advances towards Maturity. The Beginning and End of Life conceal this glorious Faculty; and it is lost in both, like a River whose source is under the Earth, and which hastens to bury it self in the Earth again.

In our Infancy it is cover'd with thick *Darkness, like the Morning spread upon the Mountains*; in Old Age it is no more than the small remains of the Day that is departed; and even in the Noon of Life and the midst of our Perfection, it is often clouded over, and intercepted from our view.

Behold the weak, helpless Infant! and see what Influence his Weakness has upon his Reason! He is incapable of discovering his Wants, or making his Satisfaction known. He is as much directed by the Understanding

342 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

of others, and stands as much in need of it, as if he were not endued with a Rational Soul; and hardly seems to enjoy the blind, and uncertain guidance of Natural Instinct.

And when his Organs are strengthened and gradually prepar'd for the use of his Reason, How faint and feeble is the Light that at first discovers it self! and how little can be discern'd by the dawning of the Understanding! it is unhappily govern'd by the Senses that are Inferior to it, and is fill'd with Prejudice and Error, by a false Report and Representation of things.

The faltering Efforts of the Babbling Tongue betray our Ignorance, and shew the vain and trifling Notions that have stoln in upon us.

Even in the second Stage of Life, and the flower of our Youth, though we do not altogether *speake as a Child, and think as a Child*, yet our Reason is hurried away with impetuous Violence, and derives its Judgment from our irregular Passions and partial Affections. It deceives it self with false appearances of Happiness, and tortures and disquiets the Mind with extravagant Hopes and Expectations. Like the rising Sun, it drives nothing but Mists before it, and with difficulty attains to its full Brightness.

But in the State of Manhood, you will say, that our Reason displays it self with an Excellent Glory, and bears a beautifull Resemblance of *the Fountain of Light*.

Yet

Ye
of Me
are bu
down
eth do
and
upon
that
Bu
our V
it, w
time
force
Ages
Life
It lo
searc
Tru
Obs
regu
max
hou
B
but
decl
agai
In
be r
tain
with
bot
C
Hea

Yet still it might be urg'd, that *the Thoughts of Mortal Men are Miserable, and our Devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible Body presseth down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind that museth upon many things; and hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon Earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us.*

But however we may, without indulging our Vanity, or rather to rebuke and mortify it, we may allow that Reason does for a short time exert it self with an active and lively force. It gathers the Experience of former Ages, and enlarges its Prospect beyond the Life of Man, to many Generations to come. It looks into the Secrets of Nature with a searching Eye, and discovers many important Truths, by its diligent Inquiries, and curious Observations. It furnishes the Mind with a regular train of Thoughts, and lays up the maxims of Wisdom and Policy, in the Storehouse of the Memory.

But alas! it does *not continue in one stay*; but as soon as it is advanc'd to Perfection, it declines apace, and falls away to Imperfection again.

In our pursuit of Knowledge, we seem to be rolling up a Stone to the top of a Mountain, which does not rest a moment there, but with hast and violence rolls down to the bottom.

Our *Sun* does not *stand still in the midst of Heaven*; but before we can entirely enjoy the
de-

344 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

delightfull view, that we have gain'd by its Ascent, it snatches us from it, by its suddain and precipitate Descent.

Our largest Thoughts are soon contracted, and the Mind is lessen'd and confin'd to narrower Notions and Opinions.

The Memory is too frail to retain the Characters that were stamp'd upon it; and though they were deeply engraven as with a *pen of Iron*, yet our Heart becomes as the *melting Wax*, and loses the Impression.

Have we not known the most valuable Treasures gather'd together by long experience? and have we not concluded that they could never be wip'd out of *the Book of Remembrance*? But how soon were they lost! *we went by, and lo! they were gone; we sought them, but their place could no where be found.*

The most artfull Contrivances, and the justest Thoughts and Conclusions, are broken and confounded by the Infirmities of Age. And those loose Fragments that still continue, how valuable soever in themselves, are no more than the imperfect Remains of distant Antiquity; and they are often cover'd with Dust, and it is hard to draw them out of the general Ruin, and joyn them together.

And instead of the regular Government of Reason, there is little to be found but Childish Imaginations, or Indolent Dotage.

The Preference indeed is frequently given to Age, on the account of its Wisdom and Experience; But this is rather a sense of past Follies,

Follie
the
dang
capab
to av
It
is aff
and t
ture,
parta
An
and l
ascen
tinua
to th
joyce
It
Glas
a Mi
A
who
abaf
Rea
from
ador
was
God
How
Firs
flow
and
F
give

Follies, than a new supply of Wisdom. And the Aged having suffer'd Ship-wreck on the dangers of Human Life, are therefore most capable of directing the unexperienc'd Youth, to avoid the like Miscarriages.

It is a melancholly Truth, that our Reason is affected with the Corruptions of the Body; and though widely different from it in its Nature, is influenc'd by its several Changes, and partakes of its Improvement and Decay.

And though *in Death* it is *divided* from it, and breaks forth from its Earthly Prison, to ascend to *God that gave it*; yet during its continuance here, it is forc'd to be conformable to this Wretched State, and to *Suffer* or *Re-joyce* with the Members of the Body.

It *sees but through a Glass darkly*; and the Glass is fullied with every Vapour, and brings a Mist over the Understanding.

Alas! who can bear this Consideration? who can think of these things, and not be abash'd and confounded? is this our Admir'd Reason? was this once *a pure Influence flowing from the Glory of the Almighty*? was this once adorn'd with *the Brightness of the Everlasting*? was this *the unspotted Mirror, and the Image of God's Wisdom*? How is it chang'd by our Fall! How different is it from the Reason of our First Parent, that did not manifest it self by slow degrees, but shone forth at once a full and perfect Day!

How long might this Lamp of God have given Light to us! even *for ever and ever*, like
the

346 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

the seven Lamps of Fire that are burning Day and Night before the Throne. But how soon is its *Oil spent!* How soon is our *Vessel* empty! The Trembling Flame hastens to depart from us, and is every moment Fluttering and going away. So frail is our Reason! So just an occasion does it afford for Humility, if we consider it only as subject to Natural decay! But how much more will it afford, if we consider it,

Secondly, As it is liable to be extinguish'd by suddain Violence! And here I might observe that every trifle in Nature is capable of offering Violence to it. And though it is plac'd on a Throne, and intrusted with Authority and Power, yet it is easily mov'd from its place, and depos'd by the Tumultuous Passions.

It cannot bear a surprize or excess of Joy, or an oppressive weight and continuance of Sorrow: its edge is often taken away, by too close an attention to one Thing; and it is as often distracted by troubling it self with many.

If it is not exercis'd and employ'd, it sinks into a Brutish Stupidity, and is so far from bearing the likeness of God, that it hardly retains the appearance of a Man: it buries it self in the heavy Matter to which it is united, and seems to be falling into the Dust, with its Companion, the Body.

And if it exercises it self too much, it spends and exhausts its Strength: the variety of Thoughts

Thoughts confound it, and the earnestness and intenseness of them, spins the Thred too fine, and breaks the Chain that held them together.

But passing over these Dangers, we may proceed to consider the deplorable Effects of violent Diseases, and the Ruin and Havock which they make in the Understanding. When the Animal Spirits are rais'd into a Ferment; and the wild Imagination has cast off the Government of Reason, what Confusion and Disorder rises in the Mind! a thousand false Appearances impose upon it; and it deludes it self with the vainest Thoughts, vainer than even the Dreams of the Night: it wanders to and fro, without fixing upon any thing; and has not Wisdom to discern either Good or Evil. The distracted Man resembles him that was *possess'd by an Evil Spirit; he oftentimes falleth into the Fire, and oft into the Water; he dwells in Desolate Places, and it is hard to bind him, even with Chains; He is always crying, and cutting himself with Stones.*

What a miserable Creature is the Man whose Reason is either departed from him, or has not power enough to restrain his Passion, or prevent the Outrage that he offers to himself!

There cannot be a more mortifying Spectacle to Men: There can hardly be a more pleasing one to the Enemy of Mankind, than such a distracted Creature, that preys upon himself, and is the Object of his own Remorseless Cruelty, and Brutish Fury.

And

348 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

And the Case of the Idiot also bespeaks our deep Concern and Humility.

This unhappy Case is not always owing to an Original Defect in Nature, but frequently proceeds from a surprizing shock and alteration. And the Man that was just now endued with Reason, and a sufficient portion of Understanding, is in an instant depriv'd of it, and loses all the notices and distinctions of Things. His Mind is as it were blotted out, or cover'd with a Veil that cannot be taken off. And he lives, moves, and has his Being, without any sense or notion of it, and seems to continue in Life, only to shew his Weakness, and expose the multitude of his Infirmities.

And the clearest Understanding is liable to this universal Failure, if the Brain be bereav'd of its usual supply of Spirits, or oppress'd with too quick a return of them, and too great a charge. The straining or slackning of the Nerves disturbs the harmony of the Thoughts, and a fatal bruise breaks the whole frame of the Mind.

Dreadfull also are the Consequences of a Palsy or Apoplex which strikes with an unexpected force, and leaves only a languishing Life, and a confus'd Understanding.

One part of the Body becomes a dead, uncomfortable weight to the other; and while the wither'd Members can scarcely bear each others weakness, Reason is also bereav'd of its natural Quickness, and forgets its past Conceptions,

cepti
Life,
An
it, b
Le
Perfe
Wor
Le
gacit
in O
to re
Le
Wifo
tend
self
L
the
Arm
L
Law
wea
blish
L
pose
Cha
A
quan
Hol
glor
preb
mos
ries
heig

ceptions, losing the miserable remainder of Life, in the sleep of a lingering Death.

And these Fatal Strokes not only impair it, but frequently extinguish it at once.

Let us suppose a Man to be in the most Perfect State that ever was enjoy'd in this World.

Let his Reason have the most piercing Sagacity in Discerning, the most curious Eye in Observing, and the most faithfull Memory to retain its Observations.

Let his Judgment be enrich'd with all the Wisdom of former Ages, his Knowledge extend to every Art and Science, and spread it self over them, *as the Waters cover the Seas.*

Let him understand the Interests of Courts, the State of Nations, the Conducting of Armies.

Let him form the most compleat Body of Laws, to govern future Generations, and weave the closest Schemes of Policy, to Establish the regular Succession of Princes.

Let his Resolutions be stedfast, his Purposes generous, and his Soul as diffusive, as Charity it self.

And above all, Let him be thoroughly acquainted with the Fountains of Wisdom, the Holy Scriptures; Let him understand their glorious Truths, as far as they can be comprehended by Human Reason; and pay the most awfull regard to those sublimer Mysteries *that pass Man's Understanding.* Yet at the height of this Perfection, if his Blood should
break

350 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

break through its appointed Bounds, and, That dreadful Messenger of Death, an Apolloplex should arrest him; His Reason will go down in the midst of his Course, and no more send forth its enlivening Beams upon Earth; His Memory will lose all the stores that were distinctly rang'd within it; His Judgment will be spoil'd of all its Wisdom; His Knowledge will be turn'd into Darknes, His Policy unravell'd, his Resolutions broken, his generous Intentions disappointed, His Precepts of Morality eras'd, and His Divine Conceptions scatter'd away.

How terrible is This Change! How amazing This Devastation!

And though perhaps it is impossible to find the Man that can entirely answer the Character that we have drawn; yet we may remember (but we must remember it with the greatest regret) that a late fatal seizure bereav'd the World of *One, of the Noblest Capacities, that ever was fill'd with Divine and Human Learning.

And the Church must for ever bewail the surprizing Death of an Excellent Prelate, *under whose shadow* she thought her self safe, at the close of the Evening, though he was snatch'd from her at the opening of the Morning.

But she must weep for her self, not for him, for he is numbred among the Saints, and shines like the Stars in the Firmament.

* Dr Smalbridge.

It is indeed an afflicting consideration that Reason is subject to natural decay, that it is also liable to be extinguish'd by suddain violence. But these are only to be lamented, as Misfortunes incident to our Nature.

But there is a more afflicting consideration arises from our own Faults. For

Thirdly, It is frequently impair'd and lost by moral Corruption. Our Reason, though of a purer Substance, and greater Excellence than the Body, is yet affected by its union with it, and disorder'd by the Infirmities that attend it; and not only by its unavoidable Infirmities, but by its chosen Corruptions: and every Vice weakens its Power, and fullies its Light; and as the violence of the Will, and the irregularity of the Affections increaseth, the Authority of Reason is lessen'd, and the force of its Discernment gradually taken away.

The gratification of our Lusts destroys its vital Flame; Gluttony stifles it; and Drunkenness over-powers it, like a rapid Stream that has broken down its proper Bounds.

The fumes that rise from a loaded Stomach, darken the Understanding; and excess in Drinking, disturbs the order of the Thoughts, and fills the Mind with absurd, incoherent Trifles; and an habitual compliance with our sinfull Lusts, changes our justest conceptions of things, into stupid Dotage and Forgetfullness.

Rea-

352 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

Reason when it is made subservient to Vice, is condemn'd to *Nebuchadnezzar's Fate*, it is *driven from Men, and forc'd to dwell with the Beasts*. And instead of ascending to the Presence of God, it is held Captive in the loathsome Prisons of Sin.

There is nothing that more effectually shews the weakness of Reason, than its yielding to our vicious Appetites, and stooping down to Corruption.

And to convince us, how little we should depend upon it, and how unsafe it is to lean to our own Understanding, God is sometimes pleas'd to permit even the wisest of Men, Men that are endued with the greatest Abilities, the sharpest Wit, and the deepest Learning, to depart from the Dignity of their Nature, and prostitute their glorious Faculties to the service of the most shamefull Sins.

Hence they are often unequal to themselves in their Conduct, and act inconsistently with their own Judgment. Hence they are expos'd to the Scorn even of the Weak and Ignorant, and are *made a Rebuke to the Foolish*.

And better were it for them to live in *Egyptian* Darkness, than to act in contempt of the plainest Conviction, and offend their Reason and Conscience, which shed such an abundance of Light upon them.

What a remarkable Instance of Human Frailty was *Solomon*! *How Wise was he in his Youth, and as a Flood fill'd with Understanding! His Soul cover'd the whole Earth, and the largeness*

ness of his Heart was even as the Sand on the Sea shore. He spake of Trees, from the Cedar that is in Lebanon, even to the Hyssop that springeth out of the Wall; He spake also of Beasts and of Fowl, and of creeping Things, and of Fishes. 1 Kings 4. 33.

And above all, he shew'd the Excellence of his Understanding, in choosing Wisdom rather than Riches and Honour, and in adorning the Temple of God, with the most Beautifull Glory.

Yet this seemingly-perfect Man was ensnar'd by the Love of strange Women, and turn'd away his Heart from the Lord. With many fair speeches they caus'd him to yield; with the flattering of their Lips they forc'd him, to follow other Gods.

And so miserably was He deluded, that He went after the Goddess of the Zidonians, the Abomination of Moab, and even Molech, the Abomination of the Children of Ammon.

And so far did he debase himself, as to fall down and Worship every Idol, that the multitude of his Wives and Concubines set up.

So vain and weak a Thing, is Human Reason!

Having gone through the several Particulars propos'd, Let me draw a few practical Inferences from them. And

1st, Since our Reason advances by a slow and difficult Progress, and then hastens to decay, Let us possess our selves with an humble Opinion of it, and never entertain haughtiness and presumptuous Thoughts.

354 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

Let us *Look into* the Deep Things of God, as the *Angels* do, with a Religious Awe and Reverence. And let us never be so vain and insolent as to reject those important Truths that exceed the measure of our Capacities, or to disbelieve every thing that we cannot entirely comprehend.

It was Pride (as we may justly presume) that cast down Lucifer from Heaven.

Dan. 5. 20. *When Nebuchadnezzar's Heart was lifted up, and his Mind hardened in Pride, he was depos'd from his Kingly Throne, and they took his Glory from him.*

Acts 12. 23. *And when Herod receiv'd the Blasphemous Applause of the People, and gave not God the Glory, the Angel of the Lord smote him, and he gave up the Ghost.*

And Pride is the Fountain of all those Errors and Heresies, that overspread the World with so mighty a Deluge, that every good Man cannot but Tremble for the Ark of God.

But if we consider the growth and different measures of our own Capacities, and the vastly greater difference of others, we shall see the folly of making our Judgment, the standard of Truth, and disdaining to receive any Thing, that is not exactly equal to it.

In our Infancy we have no conception of many Things that afterwards are easy and obvious to us. The first opening of the Understanding shews us but a confus'd and doubtful Prospect, and we resemble the Blind Man, who as soon as he was restor'd to Sight,

look'd

look'd up and said, I see Men, as Trees, walking. Mark 8. 24.

But when our Understanding is enlarg'd, we attain to a plainer discernment, as *He saw every Man clearly*, when he was bless'd with a more perfect Recovery. v. 25.

The Discoveries of latter Ages, have brought us to the knowledge of many Arts and Science, that were hid from the former: and it cannot *enter into the Hearts* of some to *conceive*, what others justly believe; and That which seems *impossible* to some Men, *is possible* with others.

And therefore since limited Creatures are not all confin'd to the same measure, but enlarge their Knowledge to different degrees, certainly we should allow that the Infinite Wisdom of God, does extend it self beyond the utmost compass of our Thoughts.

Even our Senses are capable of Improvement, and may be enliven'd with a quicker perception of their proper Objects. And were God to give us a larger Number of Senses, we might be acquainted with a greater variety of Objects, and behold a wider Scene open before us.

And if this may not improperly be suppos'd of our Senses, we may upon better grounds suppose, that God, in his due time, will exalt our Reason to a more comprehensive view, than it yet enjoys.

How *foolish and slow of Heart to Believe*, were *the Two Disciples that went to Emmaus*! Though they convers'd with their Saviour, and heard

356 *The Weakness and Uncertainty*

him expound the Scriptures concerning himself, yet he seem'd to be only a Stranger in Israel.

Their Hearts burn'd within them indeed, while He talk'd with them by the way; but till their Eyes were open'd, they knew him not.

And in like manner, we are for a long time held in ignorance of those things that are not difficult in themselves, and are written in so plain a Character, that *he that runs may read them.*

And as in the progress of our Reason, we obtain new measures of Knowledge, so in its decay, our Mind loses them again, and becomes as if it had never obtain'd them!

We should therefore *bring every Thought into Subjection to God*, and wait with Patience and Submission, till That great and glorious Day, when our Reason will shine forth, as at the first, and be rais'd to the immediate Enjoyment of the Fountain of Light.

And, Since it is liable to be extinguish'd by sudden Violence, Let us embrace the present Opportunity, and exercise this distinguishing Faculty, while it is yet in its perfect Brightness.

The Accepted Time, the Day of Salvation, is but of a short continuance, and *the Night will quickly come, in which no Man can work.* And before it is yet Night, our Lamp may be snatch'd away, *our Candlestick be remov'd.* And if we survive our Reason, we cannot Live, to answer the purposes of Life; for we shall be incapable of performing a reasonable Service.

And though it should not be totally extinguish'd, yet if it is much impair'd, our Virtue will be a very imperfect Oblation; and the *Blind and Maim'd*, cannot be an *acceptable Sacrifice* to God.

Let us therefore devote our Reason to the Authour and Giver of it, while it bears the Liveliest resemblance of him that gave it.

Let us use it aright this very moment; and let not the day depart from us, before we have done our Duty, lest our Sun should rise no more.

3dly and Lastly, Since our Reason is frequently impair'd and lost by Moral Corruption; Let us abstain from Sin that has so fatal an effect upon it, and never quench this Heavenly Flame, by offering unnatural Violence to it.

Let us Employ it, as it ought to be Employ'd, in meditating upon the Law of God, and finding out the Treasures of Divine Wisdom.

This will daily improve it, and give a larger compass to our Thoughts and Conceptions. Our Capacities will extend themselves, and the purest Pleasures will flow into them, and yield us perfect Satisfaction.

If we are enslav'd by Sin, we may indeed imagin, that the impairing our Reason, will give us Peace and Security. But it is a false and treacherous Peace: and how much soever we weaken our Reason, yet the dreadful day will

come, when it will recover its strength, and execute revenge upon us.

If we admire it only as the Atheists do, and abuse it to the denial of God, we degrade our Nature. For according to the Atheists Opinion, it is barely corruptible Matter; it sprung from the womb of the Earth; and all its admir'd Thoughts perish in the Grave.

But if we believe it to be the Gift of God, and make a gratefull use of it: though it is subject to natural Decay; though it may be, for a time, extinguish'd by suddain Violence; yet it will Live hereafter, in a better State, where no Decay, no Violence, no Corruption can come near to hurt it.



5 JY61

F I N I S

od,
t is
be,
ce;
te,
on